

The Epic Story of Lord Ram's Marriage with Sita

{ Narrated entirely in English from Goswami Tulsidas' revered devotional classic "Ram Charit Manas", and his other 3 books, viz. "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nachu" & "Geetawali", as well as sage Veda Vyas' rendering of the story in "Adhyatma Ramayan". }

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration & English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

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Presented in English By:--

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Language: English + Hindi / Vernacular + Sanskrit.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord and an incarnation of Lord Shiva himself, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfil Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

The Epic Story of Lord Ram's Marriage with Sita

{Narrated entirely in English from Goswami Tulsidas' revered devotional classic "Ram Charit Manas", and his other 3 books, viz. "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nachu" & "Geetawali", as well as sage Veda Vyas' rendering of the story in "Adhyatma Ramayan".}

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration & English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

PREFACE

In this book we shall read the eclectic story of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. This marriage was a formalisation, from the perspective of the gross visible world, of the union or coming together of two stupendous invisible forces of creation, viz. Brahm, the all-powerful Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram, and his cosmic dynamism known as Shakti represented by Sita.

This union was needed to neutralize and weed out evil forces, represented by the cruel demon race, from the surface of the earth so that the rest of the living world could live in peace.

Lord Ram was an incarnation on earth as a human being of Lord Vishnu who is the macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being known in the Upanishads as Brahm. Sita is a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of material prosperity and wealth that Vishnu needs to take care of this visible world dependent upon material things for its sustenance.

For the purpose of our narration we shall read exhaustively from two excellent sources who have expertly described this story. One is the famous saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas, and the other is the renowned sage Veda Vyas.

Tulsidas has elaborately narrated this eclectic story in the following books—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (Chapter 1), from its Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—till Doha no. 361 at the end of this Canto; (b) Geetawali, in its Baal Kand, from verse no. 1/47—till verse no. 1/110; (c) Janki Mangal; and (d) Ram Lala Nahachu. The full English version of these last three books has been uploaded by this humble author for free download on his website mentioned at the end of this preface.

The other excellent source we shall read is Veda Vyas' classical narration known as Adhyatma Ramayan in which the story of Lord Ram's marriage is narrated in Baal Kand (Chapter 1), from Canto no. 4—to Canto no. 7.

In order to make the present book exhaustive and a comprehensive text in English that tells the divine story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita in its entirety, all the above books have been included in our narration. The full original texts in Hindi and Sanskrit are quoted, followed by a detailed exposition and related commentary in English. Special treatment is accorded to Tulsidas' "Ram Charit Manas"—which forms Part-1 of this 2-part book—because, in due course of time, it shall be included in an elaborate English

exposition on this great and unparalleled magnum opus of Tulsidas on which I am working at present. In fact, “Ram Charit Manas” is one classic in Hindi that is revered and given the same respect as the ancient Purans and other holy scriptures.

This Book titled “The Story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita” is divided into 2 Parts: Part-1 has the story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita as narrated in Goswami Tulsidas’ epic classic famed by the name of “Ram Charit Manas”, and Part-2 has this magnificent story as it is narrated in the rest of the books of Tulsidas, viz. “Janki Mangal”, “Ram Lala Nahachu” and “Geetawali”, as well as in the story of the Ramayan narrated by the legendary sage Veda Vyas in his great classic known as “Adhyatma Ramayan”.

Now, let’s have a brief overview of the contents of this Book titled “The Story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita”. It is divided into 2 Parts as follows:

Part-1 has the story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita as narrated in Goswami Tulsidas’ epic classic famed by the name of “Ram Charit Manas”, and Part-2 has this magnificent story as it is narrated in the rest of the books of Tulsidas, viz. “Janki Mangal”, “Ram Lala Nahachu” and “Geetawali”, as well as in the story of the Ramayan narrated by the legendary sage Veda Vyas in his great spiritual classic known as “Adhyatma Ramayan”.

Part-1 has an elaborate analytical exposition in English of Ram Charit Manas, which in the course of its narration tells us the eclectic story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita in great detail, highlighting many of its aspects that miss the eye, and which require a lot of analysis and reading between-the-lines to discover. It’s a great reading experience, and a journey of learning and exploration.

It chronicles the events in great and fascinating detail from the very beginning, i.e. from the time sage Vishwamitra arrived in the court of king Dasrath of Ayodhya seeking Lord Ram to be sent with him to his hermitage—till the end of the story when the marriage party returned back home to Ayodhya with all the four grooms (i.e. Lord Ram and his three brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) and their beautiful brides, the celebrations in the city and the atmosphere of euphoria and revelry that lasted for many long days thereafter, and finally, the departure of the guests in due course of time.

Part 2: This is divided into 4 Sections as follows:-

Section 1 has the entire text of the story from Tulsidas’ classic narration of the event in his book titled “Janki Mangal”.

Section 2 similarly consists of the entire text from Tulsidas’ short book called “Ram Lala Nahachu”. It pertains to a specific ritual known as “Nahachu” in which the groom’s hairs and nails are trimmed just before the actual marriage ceremony.

Section 3 is a wonderful and elaborate narration of the story from “Geetawali”, an exquisite ‘Book of Songs’ in which Tulsidas has written the story of the ‘Ramayan’ (the story of the life and times of Lord Ram) using the pattern of writing of verses that are set to different ‘Ragas’ (notes, tunes and modes) of Indian classical music so much so that the story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita acquires a magical charm and a special aura of divinity around it as it can now be sung melodiously to the various tunes of Indian classical music with a liberal dose of devotional quotient infused in it.

Section 4 presents to the reader a different take on this story from “Adhyatma Ramayan”, an ancient classical composition in Sanskrit by the legendary sage Veda Vyas. It deals with this story with a different perspective and tells the reader many facts not dealt with by Tulsidas.

Taken all in all, it’s an exceptionally charming story that captivates the mind and the imagination of the reader, and holds him or her in its thrall. It’s a wonderful and rare collection of eclectic classical texts that will give the reader an opportunity to enjoy this story from different perspectives.

This book of ours is an elaborate analytical exposition in English on all these five great classics that are cited in it, and in the course of its narration tells us the eclectic story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita in great detail, highlighting many of its aspects that miss the eye, and which require a lot of analysis and reading between-the-lines to discover. It’s a great reading experience, and a journey of learning and exploration.

Great deal of effort has been taken by me, to the best of my ability, to explain the original texts of these classical books in simple English, along with elaborate notes and references so that the reader can understand the story better and delve deeper into the subtle and not-so-apparent meaning of the texts. I am sure that this Book would be enjoyed by the readers who will find them entertaining as well as informing.

Whatever I wrote was a divine inspiration, and honestly I say in all sooth that I have no right to claim any sort of praise or honour for writing them, for the real ‘author’ of these books was Lord Ram himself, and I believe it in the core of my heart without any show of pretention of modesty, with me being merely a pen moving to fulfill the Lord’s wishes and mission! Say, what claim for fame and honour and praise can a ‘pen’ have for any piece of writing, for all the credit surely goes to the ‘writer’. Still, since in this physical world such subtle and sublime feelings and thoughts and understandings are difficult to comprehend and accept in practical terms, I must make it plain that as I am a humble and ordinary man with no scholarship or expertise of any sort, there are fair chances that many errors of omission, commission and oversight may have crept in these books inadvertently inspite of my diligence and efforts, and for them I pray that me esteemed reader would overlook them and excuse me for my errors and shortcomings.

Remember: ‘Sweet Nectar’ will always taste as sweet and heavenly, and it is as rejuvenating and reinvigorating as it can ever be irrespective of the cup in which it is served and the person serving it.

I offer this book to my dearest and most beloved Lord Ram as a token of my humblest of service to him. It is not only to enable the world to read the Lord’s divine story that I endeavour to write in English, but it is also to thank the Lord that he enabled me to write about him in this language. Be it noted that I am writing this book as a means to purify my own self and my writing, spending my time in remembrance of the Lord that fills my mind and heart with joy and a sense of fulfillment, and as an expression of my love and affection and gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord who has done so much for me and

taken care of my well-being like a doting father who goes out of his way to protect and take care of his dearest son.

Finally, I must thank Sri Somil Bharti of Vrindavan who has done a commendable work of doing for me the Roman Transliteration of the original Text which is in the language known as “Avadhi”, a local dialect which is a variation of Hindi as it is spoken in the region of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was born.

Amen!

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Date—15th April, 2016.

Place: Ayodhya.

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The Epic Story of Lord Ram's Marriage with Sita

{Narrated entirely in English from Goswami Tulsidas' revered devotional classic "Ram Charit Manas", and his other 3 books, viz. "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nachu" & "Geetawali", as well as sage Veda Vyas' rendering of the story in "Adhyatma Ramayan".}

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration & English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

INTRODUCTION

A brief background and outline of the story

The Background—The cruel demons were tormenting all the creatures on this earth. They had even conquered the gods in the heaven. To get rid of their tyranny, sages and Mother Earth approached Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the supreme Lord, to give them succour and protection. Vishnu assured them he will come down to earth as a human being and kill their tormentors, the demons.

The Story—Thus, Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram by taking birth as a son of king Dasrath of Ayodhya. Dasrath had earlier done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) in his previous birth as king Manu. In that birth, Manu's wife was Satarupa who became Kaushalya in the present life. The couple had wanted Vishnu as their son. So, Lord Vishnu fulfilled their desire by becoming their son known as Lord Ram.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu's eternal divine consort, goddess Laxmi, revealed herself as Sita, and therefore it had to be arranged that Vishnu and Laxmi could come together as human couples also in the form of Ram and Sita. While Ram was the son of Dasrath of Ayodhya, Sita became the daughter of Janak, the king of Janakpur.

This story 'Janki Mangal' describes the divine union of Lord Vishnu as Ram, and goddess Laxmi as Sita as husband and wife in their human forms.

Since the almighty Lord Vishnu had taken a human form, certain obligations had to be met in order to comply with the laws of Nature and creation that deal with life in this mortal world, because the creator of cosmic laws cannot violate the same laws that he himself had created for his own creation if he wanted to maintain order in this creation and expected others to adhere to the laws of Nature and creation. It would be ridiculous and incongruous to expect the Lord to violate his own laws.

So it was maneuvered by divine mandate that a sage named Vishwamitra would take Ram to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by demons, and once this is accomplished an invitation would come to the sage to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita at Janakpur. Naturally, the sage took Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman along as a sight-seeing tour of a new country just like modern-day boys are taken on a holiday outing by their school teachers.

The three—the sage along with Ram and Laxman—were warmly welcomed by king Janak. The king was absolutely swept off his feet when he saw the two handsome princes, and his heart told him that Ram was the fittest candidate as a groom for his daughter Sita. But there was a hitch. It was that the king had already made a stern vow that anyone who would lift the bow of Lord Shiva that had been kept with him from some ancient time would marry Sita. This vow became the fish-bone in his throat.

Janak had invited all famous kings and princes of the time to attend this bow ceremony and try their hand at lifting it so that Sita could be married to them. Actually, Janak had wanted a valourous and strong young prince with a powerful personality to be his son-in-law, and this was the test that he devised for the purpose—because it was not a joke to play fools with Lord Shiva's bow.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman took the permission of sage Vishwamitra and went on a sight-seeing round of the city of Janakpur. The entire city erupted in joy and was enthralled at the magnificently charming sight of the two brothers meandering majestically through the streets of Janakpur. The citizens, young and old, longed to see Ram as the royal groom, and all of them with exception prayed to Lord Shiva to fulfill their wishes. While on this sight-seeing tour, Ram and Laxman also happened to enter the royal gardens where Sita had incidentally come to pray to goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva himself. When she saw the Lord she was completely bewitched and decided in her heart that she will marry Ram. But again the stern vow of her father and the horrible ignominy that would come to the immaculate reputation of the family known for righteousness, probity and decorum by being bold enough to openly declare her love for Ram made her extremely depressed and worried. She however prayed to goddess Parvati to make things happen in such a way that she would be married to Ram alone.

Now we see two prayers were working in favour of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita—one was the prayer of the citizens, and the other was of Sita. Come to think of it, even Janak might have prayed silently to Shiva to maneuver things subtly and politely in such a way that Sita could be married to Ram and his honour could still be maintained. Not only the king but his queen, the mother of Sita, too prayed to Parvati to make this happen.

When the D-day arrived, a huge crowd gathered at the venue of the bow ceremony. All eyes were focused on Lord Ram who sat along with his brother Laxman and sage Vishwamitra on a special throne king Janak had arranged for the sage. When Sita appeared on the stage, some wise kings decided that Ram was a fit candidate for her, and so abstained from attempting to lift the bow. But of course there were others who became greedy and passionate when they saw a beautiful princess whose beauty was unmatched in this world. The sober kings tried to dissuade them from being foolish and greedy, but as expected they wouldn't listen. In fact, instead of waiting for their turn patiently, they jostled with each other as they feared that the man in front would lift the bow and deprive others of the chance to marry Sita. So everyone wanted to be the first to lift the bow!

As it finally transpired, all failed to move the bow, and sat down dejected with low faces in utter humiliation. Janak was dismayed and he openly rebuked the assembled kings and princes, calling all of them impotent and weak. It was then that the chance came—sage Vishwamitra asked Ram to do what was destined. On his instructions, Lord Ram not only lifted the bow but broke it into two as he bent the creaky bow to string it.

The sky and the earth erupted in jubilation. There was a thunderous uproar of praise and musical instruments. It appeared that this was the best moment in the lives of all creatures who lived in that era.

Message was sent to king Dasrath to come with the marriage party and witness the marriage of Ram and Sita. The marriage was formalized with great pomp and pageantry. Lord Ram's other three brothers, i.e. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were also married in the same venue with a sister and two cousins of Sita.

The thunder of the breaking bow meanwhile reached the ears of another sage named Parashuram. He was a stout devotee of Lord Shiva and a warrior sage. He thought that someone had insulted Shiva, so he picked up his battle-axe to punish the arrogant fellow who had the temerity to commit such a crime, and rushed towards the marriage venue. Brimming over with anger and wrath, he confronted Ram and Laxman with vitriol pouring forth. Lord Ram however kept his calm and dignity, and finally managed to calm the angry sage who realised that Ram was not an ordinary human prince but the divine Lord Vishnu himself who is worshipped by the whole world. So the sage asked Lord Ram for forgiveness and went to the mountains to do Tapa (penance).

So, Lord Ram married Sita, and the marriage party returned to Ayodhya to rousing reception. There were celebrations and festivities galore in the city that lasted for many joyful days. Finally, the guests took leave of king Dasrath and went back home, carrying with them fond memories of the wedding of the four brothers, Lord Ram and his three siblings Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.

Sage Vishwamitra was however persuaded to tarry a little while longer at Ayodhya, but after a long time he too took leave and went back to his hermitage with his heart brimming with sweet emotions and overwhelmed with love and affection, and his mind submerged deeply in the thoughts of the pleasant events that had unfolded. The sage thanked his good luck and meritorious deeds that he had done in his life that had made it possible for him to be instrumental in bringing about the divine union of Lord Ram with Sita.

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The Epic Story of Lord Ram's Marriage with Sita

[The story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita as narrated in Goswami Tulsidas' epic book "RAM CHARIT MANAS", Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Sortha/Doha no. 361.

Full Original Text, Roman Transliteration & detailed English exposition with commentary.]

Part 1:

चौ०. यह सब चरित कहा मैं गाई । आगिलि कथा सुनहु मन लाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

yaha saba carita kahā mair̥ gāī. āgili kathā sunahu mana lāī. 1.

The story of Lord Ram from his birth till the time he grew up to reach the age of adolescence has been narrated (sung) by me till now. Whatever happened next will be narrated by me now. Please pay attention to it. (1)

[Note—The primary narrator of Lord Ram's story is Lord Shiva, and he is telling the story to his consort Parvati when she expressed her eagerness to hear the Lord's divine story from beginning to end. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110.

The episodes relating to the arrival of the learned sage Vishwamitra to take Lord Ram and his brother Laxman with him to the forest to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by demons, and the subsequent events when the sage took the two brothers to Janakpur, the city of king Janak, the father of Sita, the breaking of the strong bow of Shiva by Lord Ram that culminated in the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, and also of his other three brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan with Sita's sister and cousins, and the final celebrations at Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Ram and his father Dasrath, constitute the second part of the narration. It is in answer to the Parvati's fourth query—'please tell me how Janki (Sita) was married to Lord Ram.' Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 1st half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Tulsidas has stressed that one should listen to the divine story 'with attention'. Obviously, if one does not pay attention one would not enjoy the nectar that it contains. For instance, when one enjoys the taste and smell of the food served, the body digests is better than when one eats with disgust and forcefully just to fill his stomach. Tulsidas has said that "those who sing the episode of Lord Ram's marriage with due devotion, affection and attention will always have auspiciousness and joy in their lives—because the glory of Lord Ram is inherently a provider of happiness and bliss as well as the best

of spiritual virtues one can expect to possess.” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 361.]

बिस्वामित्र महामुनि ग्यानी । बसहिं बिपिन सुभ आश्रम जानी ॥ २ ॥

bisvāmitra mahāmuni gyānī. basahim bipina subha āśrama jānī. 2.

There was a great learned sage named Vishwamitra. He lived in a hermitage in the forest as that place was auspicious, peaceful, serene and generally compatible for his spiritual pursuits. (2)

[Note—Sage Vasistha, the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, had himself praised the glories of sage Vishwamitra in full court in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 359.

Vishwamitra was a great sage and a leader of other sages who lived in the forest. He was a ‘great sage’ as well as a ‘Gyani’ as he had learnt to practice self control over his senses; he had conquered anger and desires; any kind of sorrow or misery never disturbed his peace of mind and heart, nor did the sage had any wish for worldly pleasures and comforts.

The word ‘Gyani’ means one knows; who is self-realised and knows the truth of everything. He is a man of wisdom and erudition. People look towards him for guidance and example. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) which entitled him to attain the stature of a learned Brahmin though he was born as a Kshatriya, the warrior class.

His name is very remarkable. “Vishwaa-mitra’ has two connotations. One is that he is a friend of the whole world (Mitra = friend; Vishwa = the world). Another meaning is that his communion makes a man dispassionate and detached towards the world and its material charms (Vishwa = world; A-mitra = to be unfriendly towards). A person who keeps his company realises the futility of this mortal world and its transient and perishable nature, and therefore develops detachment from it.

His hermitage was an oasis of peace and had a divine aura about it. The area was known as ‘Siddha-shram’—the place where mystics and hermits lived. It was located in the geographical area known as Buxar in Magadh that falls in modern-day Bihar state of India. It was here that Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant form of Lord Vishnu had once lived. Sages and hermits always lived in those parts of forests that were compatible for their spiritual pursuit. These places were usually away from the hustle and bustle of city life, but at the same time were well endowed with the basic necessities of life such as water in the form of rivers or lakes, abundant fruit trees, greenery and rich vegetation.

Regarding his lineage, the sage has himself told Lord Ram when the latter enquired about his family line that “there was a great king named Kush who was the son of Brahma, the creator. He had four sons. The second son was named Kushnaabha. He had done a fire sacrifice to get a son. This produced a famous son by the name of Gaadhi. He was a very religious man. Vishwamitra was his son. Since the sage was born in the clan of king Kush, he is also known by the name of Kaushik.” Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/33/3; 1/34/1, 5, 6.

Vishwamitra further told Lord Ram “my elder sister was named Satyawati, and she was married to sage Richeek. She went (ascended) to heaven with the physical body. A great river is named after her; it is called Kaushiki. My natural habitat is in the valley of the Himalayas, but I came to this particular place for doing the fire sacrifice.” Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/34/12.

Earlier his name was Vishwarath, but when he had attained the exalted stature of Brahm-rishi, i.e. the level that is equivalent to Brahma, he began to be known as Vishwamitra.

There is an interesting story regarding his birth as narrated in Bhagwat, 9/15/8-9, and Vishnu Puran, 4/7. The story in brief is as follows—

Once, Satyawati and her mother approached sage Richeek with a request to provide them a herbal concoction that will help them get sons. Richeek sanctified two helpings of porridge with son-begetting Mantras, and gave each of them one helping with clear instructions that they should eat the one given to them, and not mix things up. Then the sage went away to take his bath. The jealous mother thought that the sample of porridge that the sage gave to Satyawati was better and more powerful, she prevailed upon her daughter to swap the samples with the argument “Daughter, everyone likes that his own son be better, and no one is interested in the brother of the wife. So, take my sample and give me yours, because my son will have to look after the whole world as he would be a Kshatriya king, while you are the wife of a sage (Richeek) and so your son will not require the powers and majesty that are needed to take care of the world. As a sage’s son, he will be contented with leading an austere life of Tapa and Yoga.”

So, the mother and daughter swapped the porridge. When Richeek came to know of this, he was very upset and accosted his wife Satyawati, telling her that she has done a very inappropriate thing. Now, her son would be a great warrior, and her brother (her mother’s son) would be a renowned sage of the stature of Brahma-rishi. When Satyawati pleaded with him to forgive her, the sage told her that now it cannot be rectified. However, though her son would be a brave warrior, the grandson would be great sage. Meanwhile, her mother’s son (her brother) became a great sage though he was born as a Kshatriya because his father was Gaadhi.

Vishwamitra was an angry man; he used to curse fluently. He had a hundred sons. It was he who had tested king Harishchandra’s steadfastness for truth and vows.

He had great mystical powers so much so that he was able to attain the exalted stature of a Brahma-rishi though he was born a Kshatriya. This story is as follows—

Once he gathered a huge army and went to the forest to hunt. There, he stayed in the hermitage of sage Vasistha who had a magical cow known as ‘Kamdhenu’ which had the mystical power to give anything one wishes. Vasistha fed the entire army and made arrangements for their comfort on the strength of this cow. Vishwamitra eyed the cow because he thought that she was more useful for a king than a hermit or a sage. When Vasistha refused to give her, Vishwamitra tried force, but was utterly defeated. All his sons were killed except one. Vishwamitra handed over the charge of the kingdom to him and went to do Tapa to acquire powers so that he can get the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. As a result of the Tapa he acquired great weapons from Lord Shiva, but again failed to snatch the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. Ashamed, he did severe Tapa once again to attain the exalted stature of a Brahma-rishi, a stature that Vasistha already possessed. To wreck vengeance upon Vasistha, he had cursed the latter’s sons and reduced them to ashes. Later on, however, the two sages became friends when one day Vasistha heard that Vishwamitra has great respect for his Brahmin-hood and spiritual powers. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Sarga 51—65.

He is the Rishi (the wise and enlightened sage or seer who conceptualized and preached) of the entire 3rd Mandal of the Rig Veda. 501 Richas (hymns) of this Mandal are directly attributed to him, and the rest to his disciples.

Along with sages Vasistha and Valmiki, he is the most famous sage who played a pivotal role in the life of Lord Ram. It was Vishwamitra who had taken Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. It was when Lord Ram went with him that he first encountered the demons, and had killed the demoness

Tadka and the demon Subhahu while flinging the demon Marich far away into the middle of the ocean. Sage Gautam's wife Ahilya was also liberated by the Lord during this trip with Vishwamitra. The sage took the Lord and Laxman to the marriage ceremony of Sita where the Lord had broken the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva and married her. All the four brothers were married on the occasion.

There is a famous story in Nadishukta (Rig Veda, 3/33) that he once prayed to rivers Vipaata and Shutudri (the modern rivers Beas and Sutlej of Punjab state of India) to part and give him a way when robbers were pursuing him.

He has been mentioned as a great sage in a number of Vedic literature—e.g. Aitareya Aaranyaka, 2/2/1; Taittiriya Samhita, 2/2/1/2; Kaushitaki Brahman, 15/1; Panchavinsha Brahman, 14/3/12.

In Rig Veda 1/24 there appears a story of Shunashshepa who was saved by sage Vishwamitra when he was about to be sacrificed in a Vedic sacrifice ritual. The sage adopted him as his son.

He is said to be Kshatriya king as mentioned in Nirukta 2/24, and Panchavinsha Brahman 21/12/2. He is believed to have been the son of king Gaadhi of Chandravansha. His earlier name was Vishwarath.

The story of sage Vishwamitra is narrated by sage Satanand to Lord Ram in the famous epic "Valmiki Ramayan", in its Baal Kand, Canto 51, verse no. 17—to Canto 65, verse no. 29. Many interesting stories related to him are narrated, and one such story is that he had created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku, and his conflict with sage Vasistha and his ultimate elevation to the status of a Brahma-rishi, i.e. a sage who has acquired the highest stature which makes him equivalent to the stature of Brahm, the Supreme Being personified.

He is counted amongst the seven great celestial Rishis or sages. The greatest contribution of sage Vishwamitra was his creating the famous Gayatri Mantra dedicated to the Sun God. It is regarded as the greatest Mantra ever conceptualized and preached in the entire pantheon of Mantras.

He is the patron sage of the great Mantra known as 'Brahm-Gayatri'.]

जहँ जप जग्य जोग मुनि करहीं । अति मारीच सुबाहुहि डरहीं ॥ ३ ॥

jaham̃ japa jagya jōga muni karahīm̃. ati mārīca subāhuhi ḍarahīm̃. 3.

At that place (i.e. in the Sidhashram), sages and hermits used to pursue spiritual and religious way of life by doing Japa (repetition of the holy Mantras), Jagya (fire sacrifices) and Yoga (meditation). This scared the demons led by Marich and Subahu*.

[*There is another way of interpreting this part of the verse. It may also mean—"The sages and hermits were immensely scared of the demons Marich and Subahu."

By naming Marich first, the sage indicated that he was the elder brother, and Subahu was his younger sibling.] (3)

[Note—What was the reason for the demons being afraid of the sages performing fire sacrifices or doing Japa and Yoga? Well, they knew that if these sages succeeded in completing their spiritual practices then they would acquire great mystical powers which they would then use to eliminate the demons. The king of demons, Ravana of Lanka, has clearly instructed his chief commanders to ensure that these sages did not do fire sacrifices as the offering made during such exercises provide nourishment to the Gods who were eternal enemies of the demon race. So if the fire and other sacrifices were not

allowed to take place, the Gods will be starved and become weak and emaciated. The weakened Gods would no longer pose any challenge to the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 181 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

Marich and Subahu were given the charge of the area where sage Vishwamitra and others did sacrifices. So, as soon as the demons saw smoke rising into the sky by the burning of the sacred fire and offerings made into it, they rushed and destroyed it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 210.

And why were the sages afraid of the demons? It was because these nasty demons did not allow them to pursue their spiritual and religious activity though the sages meant no harm to them.]

देखत जग्य निसाचर धावहिं । करहिं उपद्रव मुनि दुख पावहिं ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhata jagya nisācara dhāvahiṁ. karahiṁ upadrava muni dukha pāvahiṁ. 4.

As soon as the demons saw the fire sacrifices being done, they rushed forward. They created all sorts of mischief and nuisance, which cause a lot of grief and misery for the sages. (4)

[Note—Three religious activities are mentioned in verse no. 3—viz. Japa, Yagya and Yoga. While Japa and Yoga are done silently, the Yagya cannot be hidden. This is because as soon as the sacred fire was lit while doing Yagya, smoke rose in the sky, and this alerted the demons. So, the sages were not so much afraid of the demons while doing either Japa or Yoga as when doing Yagya.

What was the mischief the demons do? They threw meat, faecal matter, blood etc. over the sacred fire, thereby defiling it.

The next question is why did the sages not curse the demons? The answer to this is that while undertaking religious activities they used to take a vow of practicing self-control over all their instincts and evil qualities. Becoming angry and cursing would be a sin while the fire sacrifice was being undertaken. So they did not curse the demons. However, this goodness of the sages had a negative impact on the senseless demons—they thought that the sages were afraid of them and that is why they did not curse.

Another reason is that if they did curse one or two of them, the rest of the demons would take revenge and attack them mercilessly, killing all of them.]

गाधितनय मन चिंता व्यापी । हरि बिनु मरहिं न निसिचर पापी ॥ ५ ॥

gādhitanaya mana cintā byāpī. hari binu marahiṁ na nisicara pāpī. 5.

The son of Gaadhi (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) was overcome with worries. He decided that it is not possible that the sinful demons would ever be killed without the help (intervention) of Lord Hari (Vishnu). (5)

[Note—As has been said above, Vishwamitra, the chief of the sages, was worried because he could not kill the demons by cursing them. If the sage cursed the demons, it will be sinful on his part. If he prayed to them not to disturb the sages, it is impossible that the demons will oblige. Therefore, there was only one solution—and it was to get Lord Vishnu to kill them. It will have to benefits—one, it will help rid the tyranny of the

demons, and two, they will be liberated from their cursed body of a demon and their souls will find liberation and deliverance. This will prevent them from taking re-birth as a demon once again and continuing the horrors they perpetrate.

It was not too difficult because the sage knew that Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram precisely for this purpose—to eliminate the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

See verse no. 6 below.]

तब मुनिबर मन कीन्ह बिचारा । प्रभु अवतरेउ हरन महि भारा ॥ ६ ॥

taba munibara mana kīnha bicārā. prabhu avatarē'u harana mahi bhārā. 6.

Then the sage thought to himself that the Lord (Vishnu) has already taken birth to remove the burden of the earth. [This was in the form of Lord Ram who was born in Ayodhya as a son to king Dasrath and his wife Kaushalya.] (6)

[Note—When the demons had unleashed their reign of terror, mother Earth and other Gods led by the creator Brahma had prayed to Lord Vishnu to eliminate the demons and restore peace. The Lord had promised them that he will come down to earth as Lord Ram and take birth in the household of king Dasrath. This is because the Lord had to oblige him as he had done severe Tapa in his earlier life as Manu and had requested Lord Vishnu to become his son. So, this way, Lord Vishnu will be killing two birds with a single stone—the word given to Manu will be fulfilled and the prayers of the Gods will be answered. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

A very interesting observation can be made here. The demons had been defiling the fire sacrifices and tormenting the sages for a long time, then why is it that Vishwamitra now thought of inviting Lord Hari (Ram) to kill and eliminate the demons? Well, the obvious answer is that things are to be done at the proper time; one must not rush things along as it will be more harmful than producing any beneficial results. Though Lord Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram but it took him say 14-16 years to grow up to become an adolescent. After all, Lord Ram was in a human form and was obliged to follow all the norms set by the creator for the human race. The Lord could not perform miracles as it would alert the demons that Vishnu has finally arrived to get rid of them. Then, the demons would have taken remedial action—they would either go and hide somewhere, or even fall at the feet of Lord Ram begging for forgiveness. In this latter scenario, the Lord would be obliged to forgive them as it is his vow that if anyone comes and seeks his refuge the Lord must oblige him no matter how sinful that person is. This is clearly stated by Lord Ram himself when Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to seek the Lord's refuge after being kicked out by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 43 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 44.

So the learned sage had to wait for the opportune time. Now Lord Ram had grown up and used to move out of the royal palace to go hunting, and used to participate in the administrative work of the kingdom to help his father Dasrath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

एहूँ मिस देखौं पद जाई । करि बिनती आनौं दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥

ēhūṁṁ misa dēkhaum̐ pada jāṁ. kari binatī ānaum̐ dō'u bhāṁ. 7.

The sage thought that on the pretext of getting the demons killed, he will get the rare and golden opportunity of having a divine vision or sight of the holy feet of Lord Hari. He would then pray (request) and bring the two brothers along. (7)

[Note—To whom would the sage request? It's not mentioned here. Hence, we have two meanings—one, he would request the Lord himself, and two, he would request his worldly father, king Dasrath, to send Lord Ram with him to the forest to kill the demons.

The sage thought to himself that ever since Lord Vishnu took birth as Lord Ram, he had not gone to have a 'Darshan' (divine viewing) of the Lord. So, now he has got an excuse. The sage was an enlightened one, so he felt that he is very fortunate that he will have a divine vision of the holy Lord and his divine feet with the additional bonus of being able to help the Lord fulfill the purpose of his incarnation by being instrumental in bringing him to the forest and initiating the process of elimination of the demons one by one. This helped him to achieve a double reward—one was the chance to see the Lord at close quarters and act as his guardian in the forest, and second was being instrumental in removing the burden of the earth caused by the demons, a duty that great sages were supposed to perform.

The sage wished to keep the identity of the Lord secret lest it would have alerted the demons as noted in the note appended to verse no. 6 above, though all the great sages were privy to the news of Lord Vishnu having taken birth on the earth as Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 48 Ka.]

ग्यान बिराग सकल गुन अयना । सो प्रभु मैं देखब भरि नयना ॥ ८ ॥

gyāna birāga sakala guna ayanā. sō prabhu mair̐m dēkhaba bhari nayanā. 8.

The learned sage felt excited and exhilarated at the thought that “Now, I will have an opportunity to have my fill of seeing the Lord who is a treasury of Gyan (enlightenment and knowledge), Viraag (or Vairagya; renunciation, detachment and dispassion), and all the auspicious and noble Gunas (virtues and qualities). (8)

[Note—Had the sage gone earlier at the time of birth of the Lord or anytime later on, he would be welcomed and shown the Lord and his brothers to seek his blessings. Lord Ram would be summoned by his parents and ordered to bow before the sage who would then bless them. This is the routine way the things happen—when some sage or hermit arrives in a household, the parents call their son and request the guest sage to bless him. In this scenario, the guest sage is not able to spend much of a time with the child. It is a formal interaction that barely lasts for a few minutes. But now Vishwamitra is very excited as he will be able to spend a lot of time with Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. This is because he will bring the Lord along with him; the Lord will live and eat at his hermitage. The Lord will stay with him for a long time. The sage imagined the fun it would be when he would be coming back to his hermitage with the two brothers at his side. It will be a moment in his life which none of the sages, big or small, ever had. The beauty of the sight of Vishwamitra walking on the path with Lord Ram and Laxman is very wonderfully described by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 52—56. A full English version of this book Geetawali is published by this author separately.

There is an interesting interpretation to the three divine virtues Vishwamitra mentions in Lord Ram—viz. Gyan, Viraag and auspicious Gunas. The sage himself was highly

self-realised and enlightened; he was full of renunciation, detachment and dispassion; and he had all the virtuous qualities one can imagine of. So he stressed these qualities in his beloved Lord. It is these qualities that attract wise men to others; a great sage is not attracted to a prince for his fame or strength, but for his good virtues. Vishwamitra did not see a 'prince warrior' in Lord Ram, but the grand virtues of Gyan, Vairagya and Gunas that he possessed.]

दो०. बहुबिधि करत मनोरथ जात लागि नहिं बार।
करि मज्जन सरऊ जल गए भूप दरबार ॥ २०६ ॥

dōhā.

bahubidhi karata manōratha jāta lāgi nahim bāra.
kari majjana sara'ū jala ga'e bhūpa darabāra. 206.

The sage remained submerged in divine thoughts and auspicious expectations as he hurried to meet the Lord. It did not take the sage much before he reached and took a bath in the river Saryu (on the banks of which was established the great city of Ayodhya). Then he went to the royal court of the king (Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram). (Doha no. 206)

[Note—It ought to be noted that the place where Vishwamitra used to stay, the place known as Siddha-shram, was very far away from the city of Ayodhya. So this Doha implies that the sage did not waste time by staying anywhere on the way. He went straight to Ayodhya.

The way Vishwamitra was engrossed in divine thoughts and the prospect of meeting Lord Ram is finely described in Tulsidas' book Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 48.

When one is lost in thoughts one does not feel the burden of a tiring and long-haul journey. Though the sage was sure that his request for Ram would not be turned down by Ram's father king Dasrath, but still it was uncertain because he has had no previous assurance from either the Lord or the king. A similar dilemma was faced by Vibhishan when he was on his way to meet Lord Ram after being kicked out of Lanka by his own brother Ravana. Vibhishan kept on imagining and wondering as he crossed the mighty ocean to reach Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. मुनि आगमन सुना जब राजा । मिलन गयउ लै बिप्र समाजा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

muni āgamana sunā jaba rājā. milana gaya'u lai bipra samājā. 1.

When the king (Dasrath) heard that the sage has arrived (to meet him), he went forward to receive and welcome him. The king was accompanied by members of the Brahmin class of his kingdom. (1)

[Note—Brahmins are respected in the society. So when some important guest arrived, it was customary for the host king to go to receive and welcome the guest along with noble members of the society. This was specially the case when some great sage or seer came. The king took Brahmins with him to show that he holds Vishwamitra in high esteem. Usually the king does not leave his palace, but since in this case the guest was not an ordinary one but a renowned sage of the stature of a Brahma-rishi, it was obligatory on the part of Dasrath to go and meet him outside the door as a gesture of great respect.

Under normal circumstances, the royal guards would not allow any mendicant to enter the palace grounds. So when Dasrath himself went to receive Vishwamitra it was a signal to all the members of the royal household to become alert as some special guest has arrived.

Later on we shall read that when sage Vishwamitra went with Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony that would culminate in the marriage of Sita with the victorious competitor, king Janak of Janakpur also came out with a large group of Brahmins to meet and welcome the sage at the gates of the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.]

करि दंडवत मुनिहि सनमानी । निज आसन बैठारेन्हि आनी ॥ २ ॥

kari daṇḍavata munihi sanamānī. nija āsana baiṭhārēnhi ānī. 2.

The king prostrated before the sage to pay his respects to him. After that, he brought the sage inside the palace and made him sit on his own throne (again as a mark of great respect). (2)

[Note—King Dasrath seated sage Vishwamitra on his own seat to indicate to the sage that he holds him in high regard, and that being a great sage he is much more competent than him to take care of the welfare of the kingdom as well as the royal household. The king also implied that now onwards, the welfare of the kingdom is a moral responsibility of the great sage.]

चरन पखारि कीन्हि अति पूजा । मो सम आजु धन्य नहिं दूजा ॥ ३ ॥

carana pakhāri kīnhi ati pūjā. mō sama āju dhan'ya nahin dūjā. 3.

The king (Dasrath) worshipped the sage and washed his feet reverentially. He lauded his good fortune that he was honoured to have sage Vishwamitra as his guest. The king said, 'There is no one as lucky, fortunate and privileged as me today.' (3)

[Note—Sage Vishwamitra was born a Kshatriya, but he had done severe form of Tapa (austerity and penance) to attain the stature of a Brahma-rishi, a great sage who has a stature that is equivalent to Lord Brahma, the creator. Besides this, he was a perfect example of renunciation and detachment. He did not yearn for any worldly pleasures or comforts. So there was no need for him to go to kings and beg for alms or charity, or seek the patronage of any king to meet his worldly needs of money and wealth. He never did in fact. Sage Vishwamitra never wanted his Atma, his soul, to be obliged to anyone.

So it was indeed remarkable that the sage of his exalted stature would come on his own, uninvited, to meet king Dasrath. Therefore, the king thought that it was a very lucky day for him that a great sage has come to bless him on his own. Ever since Dasrath became a king, all the other sages and seers had come to him on one occasion or the other, but Vishwamitra never came. In fact, Vishwamitra rarely ventured out of the forest; if any king wished to meet him he would go to his hermitage.

By telling the sage that today he feels highly honoured and privileged to have him as his guest the king meant that it is very rare to have a great sage of the exalted stature of Vishwamitra as one's guest, giving the householder a rare opportunity to serve him and seek his blessings. The occasion is all the more rare because of the fact that Vishwamitra never goes to the place of any householder unlike other sages who roam around in this world. Even the celestial sage Narad, who is said to be the son of the creator Brahma, is habituated to roam around in the entire creation, paying visits to countless households. Therefore obviously it is a rare and great moment for the king.]

बिबिध भॉति भोजन करवावा । मुनिबर हृदयं हरष अति पावा ॥ ४ ॥

bibidha bhāmṭi bhōjana karavāvā. munibara hr̥dayam̐ haraṣa ati pāvā. 4.

The king then entertained (served) the sage well by offering him food of different varieties (i.e. the king laid out a sumptuous meal containing a variety of dishes for him). This (respect and honour) immensely pleased and delighted the sage's heart; he felt contented and happy. (4)

[Note—After formal welcome and showing of respect, the king fed the sage with a sumptuous meal that consists of a variety of delectable dishes. The sage was pleased not so much because he ate delicious food but because he had been shown the greatest respect possible and was welcome warmly.]

Another reason for the sage feeling happy was that he deduced that since the king holds him in high esteem, chances are very bright that he would concede to his requests to send his two sons, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, with the sage so that the demons could be slayed. As it transpired, after initial dithering the king did accede to the sage's requests and sent the two brothers with him.]

पुनि चरननि मेले सुत चारी । राम देखि मुनि देह बिसारी ॥ ५ ॥

puni caranani mēlē suta cārī. rāma dēkhi muni dēha bisārī. 5.

The king then summoned his four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) and placed them at the feet of the sage. [That is, the king called his sons and asked them to pay their respect to the sage by touching his feet and bowing before him.]

When the sage saw Lord Ram he lost awareness of his body; he became so exhilarated that he forgot about everything else so much that his attention was riveted on the Lord. (5)

[Note—When the four brothers came and touched the sage's feet it is natural that their father, king Dasrath, introduced them to the sage and told him their names. When the sage learnt who Lord Ram was, whom he knew to be a personified form of the Supreme

Being, it is no wonder that he became stunned and ecstatic as he was now watching the Lord—who is the object of so much adoration by the scriptures, who is inaccessible to even the greatest of ascetics and hermits who spent an entire lifetime searching the Lord in vain, who can rarely be reached by doing even the severest forms of spiritual and religious exercises, and who is so merciful and compassionate that he would reveal himself in an instant if one has the proper level of love and devotion for him—so closely, and first hand.

The sage just could not believe his eyes when he saw the Supreme Being standing before him in a personified form as Lord Ram. The sage immediately attained the transcendental state of utter bliss that comes in the highest stage of Samadhi, the transcendental state of existence of the Consciousness when nothing of the gross world is relevant.

The sage was so stunned at the sight of Lord Ram and his bewitching beauty that he forgot about observing formalities such as blessing the princes and thanking the king.

By saying that the sage forgot about the awareness of the existence of his body it is also implied that he did not remember for some moments who he was and why he had come here.]

भए मगन देखत मुख सोभा । जनु चकोर पूरन ससि लोभा ॥ ६ ॥

bha'e magana dēkhata mukha sōbhā. janu cakōra pūrana sasi lōbhā. 6.

The sage was beguiled by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram's face which resembled the sight of a full moon. The sage's mental condition was like that of the Chakor bird (the Indian red-legged partridge) which gazes at the full moon unblinkingly. (6)

[Note—The bird Chakor is reputed to be so enamoured of the moon that on the full moon night it continuously stares at the moon and turns its head gradually as the moon traverses across the sky during the night.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 47 it is affirmed that “the divine story of Lord Ram is like the beautiful and charming rays of the full moon, while saints, holy and pious people are like the bird Chakor that is so enamoured of the moon and its beauty that it keeps its gaze fixed on the latter”. In other words, such holy people keep their mind and attention fixed on the divine story and auspicious glories of Lord Sri Ram, who is a personified form of the Supreme Being.

Again, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 115 the metaphor of Chakor is used to describe that the people of the villages who met Lord Ram while he was on his way to the forest were so charmed at this magnificent sight that they gazed at the Lord's face just like the Chakor stares at the full moon.

Another instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321. Here the occasion is of Lord Ram's marriage. Lord Ram, along with his father king Dasrath and the rest of the guest, is sitting in the marriage pavilion. The Lord was the center of attraction; he was the cynosure of the eyes of all those present on that occasion so much so that they gazed at the Lord unblinkingly like the bird Chakor gazes at the full moon.]

तब मन हरषि बचन कह राऊ । मुनि अस कृपा न कीन्हिहु काऊ ॥ ७ ॥

केहि कारन आगमन तुझारा । कहहु सो करत न लावउँ बारा ॥ ८ ॥

taba mana haraṣi bacana kaha rā'ū. muni asa kṛpā na kīnhihu kā'ū. 7.
kēhi kārana āgamana tumhārā. kahahu sō karata na lāva'um̐ bārā. 8.

Then the king was greatly pleased in his heart and he said to the sage—‘Oh revered sage! You had never been so kind and graceful upon me previously. [7] Say, what is the reason of your coming here. Tell me, and I will do my best to carry out your orders without delay.’ [8] (7-8)

[Note—One does not ask his regular guest, who comes too often, why he has come. The host presumes that the guest has come in a routine way, and there is nothing special about it. But in the case of someone who never comes, especially if the guest is someone very exalted and honoured in the world, the host naturally wonders what brings him to his house. Surely there must be a special reason.

The guest was not an ordinary sage, but a Brahma-rishi, a sage of a stature that is equivalent to Brahma the creator, which made him as honourable as the king’s own royal priest Vasistha. So the king felt he would be highly privileged and honoured to fulfill the desires of Vishwamitra—especially because this sage is not in the habit of asking anything from anybody.

Hence, if the sage asks for something and the king is able to fulfill his needs then it will help spread the king’s fame and glory throughout the world; it is not always that sage Vishwamitra asks for anything.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/49, stanza nos. 1-2.]

असुर समूह सतावहिं मोही । मैं जाचन आयउँ नृप तोही ॥ ९ ॥
अनुज समेत देहु रघुनाथा । निसिचर बध मैं होब सनाथा ॥ १० ॥

asura samūha satāvahim mōhī. mair̐ jācana āya'um̐ nr̐pa tōhī. 9.
anuja samēta dēhu raghunāthā. niscara badha mair̐ hōba sanāthā. 10.

Sage Vishwamitra finally disclosed the reason for his coming to Ayodhya. He told king Dasrath—‘Hordes of demons torment me. I have come to request something from you¹. [9] Give Lord Ram along with his younger brother (Laxman) to me (i.e. send the two brothers with me) so that these demons can be killed and eliminated. I will feel secure and happy; I will be obliged.²’ [10] (9-10)*#

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “Jaachan” which also means ‘to test’. Hence, if we take this meaning, the verse changes as follows: ‘I have come to test you.’

What did Vishwamitra wish to test? Well, king Dasrath was renowned for his magnanimous, gracious and helpful nature; he had always obliged the sages and gods, and he had always fought on their behalf. After all, the Supreme Being will not take birth as a son of any ordinary man. So the sage wished to test this quality in Dasrath.

He also wanted to test the level of enlightenment of Dasrath—which unfortunately the king lacked. This is proved immediately as soon as the sage had expressed his desire because the king, upon learning what the sage wanted, flatly declined to oblige him. The king forgot that he is committing some grave mistakes—one, by refusing to accede to the sage’s request after having promised him that he will fulfill his desires immediately, the king was going back on his own words which is a very bad character and is a punishable offence; two, this was like playing with fire because the sage could curse him for his refusal, inviting horrible consequences; and three, that Lord Ram was not a man’s son but

the Supreme Being who had simply obliged him by becoming his son because the king had done severe Tapa with this request, and that the Lord has other much more important duties and obligations in this creation than to grow up and rule an ordinary worldly kingdom known as Ayodhya like so many other kings in the dynasty.

The question now arises, why was Dasrath so ignorant of the facts? Well, herein lies the wonderful play of the Lord's 'Maya'. The 'Maya' is the Supreme Beings dynamic cosmic powers that create delusions; it holds the entire creation in its sway; there is no creature or god who escapes its snare. It is this Maya that cast its magical spell of delusions on Dasrath, eclipsing his wisdom and propelling him into an intellectual void that made him forget the reality about who Ram was. Refer Doha no. 207 below.

Another interesting point to note is that the cruel demons who so relentlessly and ruthlessly tormented the sages and ruined their fire sacrifices did not dare to disturb the fire sacrifice done by Dasrath for getting sons, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8. Well, what can be the reason? The answer is this: Dasrath was a very brave and invincible king with an equally brave and invincible army. Evil creatures of a pervert mind do not dare to irritate those who are strong and capable of taking revenge; they torment the humble and the weak because they know that the latter would not harm them. Remember: the demons were like modern-day terrorists who attack the weak and the defenseless, and not the powerful and the resourceful because they know that if they attack the latter they would suffer immensely, for these sinful people know inside their hearts that what they are doing is wrong and unrighteous, and wrongfulness and unrighteousness saps their moral courage and spiritual strength, replacing it with inherent fear and cowerdise.

The demons knew that if they dared to disturb the fire sacrifice of the mighty king Dasrath, then the king would put his entire army and employ all his strength to punish them, and then they will have no place to hide. Their king, the demon Ravana of Lanka, feared complete destruction of his golden city of Lanka should he annoy Dasrath. They also feared the wrath of Vasistha whom they knew to be a powerful sage as he was the son of the Creator (Brahma) himself (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8).

On the other hand, they had less fear from the numerous sages and hermits whom they attacked and whose fire sacrifices they ruined because these demons knew that these sages don't have the backing of a powerful army, and that they will not curse them because while doing a fire sacrifice they took a vow to overcome anger and refrain from cursing anyone.

Besides this, the sages, seers and hermits lived alone in isolated hermitages in remote far-flung areas of the earth, places that were not protected by armies, while cities and towns were well protected by walls and guards. When Dasrath performed the fire sacrifice to beget a son, his whole army was on alert with its entire array of formidable arsenal kept ready to ward-off any attack by inimical forces. When the sages and hermits did the fire sacrifice, they had no protection whatsoever.

The demons therefore thought it wise to let Dasrath alone, and they abstained from unnecessarily provoking him into a war that would be destructive for them.

²Sage Vishwamitra was a Brahmin by his spiritual actions, and king Dasrath was a Kshatriya. The Kshatriya is duty-bound to protect the Brahmins and their religious activities; this the former had been doing since the dawn of civilization. So, the sage said that he has come to ask Dasrath to help him by killing the demons who are defiling his fire sacrifice. By directly asking for Lord Ram, the sage clearly implied that Dasrath's great army will not be helpful in this case.

Another important point is that the sage said that Lord Ram's 'younger brother' should be sent with him; he did not specifically mentioned 'Laxman' or any one of the

others, viz. Bharat or Shatrughan. But Laxman was always so close and dear to Lord Ram that whenever Ram's 'younger brother' was mentioned it was deemed to mean Laxman. Hence, Vishwamitra had no doubt in his mind that the king would know whom the sage means by saying 'the younger brother of Ram'.

There is a reason for asking for Laxman. Laxman was a personified form of Seshnath, the thousand-hooded coiled serpent on which Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean known as Kshir Sagar. Seshnath is also the one who is believed to hold the earth on his hood. This Seshnath manifested himself as Laxman to help Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to remove the burden of the earth, the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17.

*Sage Vishwamitra told Dasrath—'Oh great king. Cruel savages who live beyond the boundaries of your realm have been constantly intruding into your territory, plundering and pillaging at random and with ease. They have found far-flung, outlying remote areas of your extended kingdom easy ground to prey upon because these places are not as robustly protected as the towns and cities with their walls and ramparts that are well guarded by your army. These areas are generally inhabited by sages and seers who prefer to live away from the hustle and bustle of crowded places, and have established their hermitages there. Forest-dwelling tribes and simple harmless folks are the ones who live there. Since such subjects of your kingdom are humble and defenseless against the merciless intruders, these cruel savages whom I would call 'demons' because of their blood-thirsty, sinful and evil nature, prey on them and torment them endlessly, without any rhyme or reason. We, the sages and seers who lead a reclusive life in hermitages and spend our time in religious activities and meditation or teaching and studying the scriptures, are seen by these demon-like savages as their natural enemies though we pose no threat to them, and so they target us ruthlessly.

We are not even able to do our daily chores and offer oblations without fear, and there is a nagging dread of either getting harmed in physical terms or at least being disrupted in our practices and rituals.

Since I (Vishwamitra) am the most senior amongst all the sages, seers and hermits living in that area, I decided that it was my moral duty and responsibility to do something on behalf of the entire community of holy men. You can say that I have come as a representative of all the sages and seers who are suffering gravely under the constant threat of these savages. Many of the sages and seers feared a backlash from the savages if they dared to come to you, the king of the realm, and seek your help, because they were sure that though you will certainly help them by sending your invincible army to face these savages, but the problem is that these rascals won't attack as long as the army is there. And since it is not practically feasible for the army to stay indefinitely at remote places, once it leaves the savages would strike us with greater viciousness and renewed ferocity in order to take revenge upon us. So the majority of the sages preferred not to annoy the cruel blood-thirsty savages, the 'demons' who are evil and sinful and cruel to the extreme.

Now, if you can help me in the plan I have devised to get rid of these savages, great good and fame would come to you. You will not only accumulate points of religious merit but history will also honour you as the great and honourable king who lived upto his reputation of not dithering in doing his duties without a second thought and of protecting the subjects of his kingdom well even it meant putting his own self-interest at peril.

Listen therefore: As I have pointed it out to you, sending a huge army is not the solution as it would alert our enemies, the cruel savages (the 'demons') and it would back-fire. They will go into hiding and never face your army, so no purpose will be

served. So I have carefully devised an alternative plan. You should send your two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, with me. This will not cause any suspicion in the mind of the demons (the savages), and so they will attack us in the routine manner when we set out to do our daily religious practices. It is then that these two powerful brothers—who are like the splendorous sun as far as the removal of the darkness of the night symbolized by these evil savages is concerned, or are like the flame which attracts the fly and then burns it—would then effortlessly get rid of the cruel demons as easily as the sun overcoming the darkness of the night by merely rising in the horizon or the flame burning the flies by just remaining lighted.

And my dear king, if you are worried about the safety of your two sons, then perish the thought. Don't you know about my reputation? I am not an ordinary sage, but one who possesses such mystical powers that I could have myself demolished the mightiest of the demon army (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 in this context). But I can't do that because I have taken a vow as part of my religious austerity not to take revenge, not to show anger, not to curse and not to show how strong and powerful I am. But that does not mean I am weak and unable. Remember: your two sons are safer with me than they are with you. You don't have that mystical ability that I as a sage have. I don't speak a lie because sages, seers and hermits who lead an austere life of total renunciation in forests, remaining involved in nothing but religious pursuits, are not accustomed to doing so (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 210). So don't worry about the safety of your two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman.

Besides this, I do not accept debts and obligations of any kind whatsoever. So be sure that I will compensate them as well as you for your magnanimity and graciousness if you let Lord Ram and Laxman go with me. They, and you, will be more-than-fully rewarded. You will get the blessings of countless sages and seers who would be freed from this constant horror of savages, and these blessings in themselves would be the strongest shield for you and your sons in future.

Therefore, oh great and noble king, please send Lord Ram and Laxman with me. God bless you!

#The wise sages, seers and hermits had called a meeting to discuss the problem of the demons tormenting them and ruining their fire sacrifices. They decided that they will have to act diplomatically and wisely if they want to get rid of this terror. If they went to king Dasrath and asked for help, he would surely do so, but obviously he would send in his army to fight the demons, kill them or chase them away. But that would not be the solution—because the demons will hide and keep low till the army is there, and once the army goes back to its barracks, the demons would wreak havoc.

So, what should be done? The congregation of sages and hermits decided to act secretly and appointed their senior-most member, sage Vishwamitra, for the covert mission. He was to go to Ayodhya like any other sage going out on his routine visit to kings. He would not request for the army, but would bring Lord Ram and Laxman, the two empowered sons of king Dasrath, to the forest instead. Even if the demons discovered about the visit they would think that Vishwamitra was invited by the king to teach his two sons the scriptures or secrets of some martial arts and secret weapons that Vishwamitra was known to possess. This will not arouse suspicion in the minds of the demons about the real intention of Vishwamitra's visit.

The sages knew who Lord Ram was; they knew that he was as powerful, potent, dynamic, pure, divine, holy, and of course as scorching as the Fire God himself. Remember that Lord Ram and his three brothers had their origin in the sweet pudding presented to Dasrath by the Fire God himself. In other words, they had the powerful and dynamic genes of the Fire God in them, rather than that of Dasrath who was after all a

mere human king inspite of him being very strong and powerful. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Like the flame of a candle that first attracts the insect and then burns it, the sages knew that Lord Ram would attract the demons in droves and then get rid of them by killing them. This is exactly what had happened. On the way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra, the demoness Tadka had attacked Lord Ram, Laxman and the sage. We shall read shortly that she was instantly killed by the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 209.

Another pertinent question now arises—what attracted Tadka to Lord Ram and Laxman? Later on in the story we shall read that another demoness named as Supernakha was also attracted to Lord Ram. What attracted her? She was enchanted by the ‘asrounding beauty, the matchless aura of glamour surrounding the Lord, and the Lord’s fascinating charm’—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 17.

Even her cousin brothers, the demons Khar and Dushan, whom she summoned to take revenge upon Lord Ram when he spurned her overtures and got her nose and ears cut-off to punish her for being pervert and promiscuous, were mesmerized at the beauty of the Lord’s physical form as clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 19.

Even sage Vishwamitra was struck by the beautiful images of Lord Ram and Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 209.

Coming back to our present discussion regarding Tadka, she had been attracted by the Lord’s beauty like the fly is attracted by the charm of the flame. And like the flame burning the fly to death, Lord Ram had slayed Tadka too as referred to herein above.

See the following Doha no. 207 which carries on this conversation.]

दो०. देहु भूप मन हरषित तजहु मोह अग्यान ।
धर्म सुजस प्रभु तुझ कौं इन्ह कहैं अति कल्याण ॥ २०७ ॥

dōhā.

dēhu bhūpa mana haraṣita tajahu mōha agyāna.
dharma sujasa prabhu tumha kaur̥m inha kaham̐ ati kalyāna. 207.

The sage requested the king—‘Oh king! Give cheerfully what I request, and discard delusions and ignorance¹. Don’t have doubts; don’t dither, because oh king this will be an auspicious act on your part that would conform to the laws of Dharma and give you religious merit, which will enhance your fame in the world (and invite blessings from countless pleased sages and seers who will feel obliged to shower their blessing and praises upon you).

Not only this, they (Ram and Laxman) would be blessed with great glories and acquire renown by the great achievements that would come their way.² (Doha no. 207)

[Note—¹See note appended to Chaupai line nos. 9-10 above.

²A King’s religious duty is to protect his subjects from enemies or those who torment them. Vishwamitra was being tormented by demons, so it is a moral duty of king Dasrath to help him. It would obviously be a meritorious work. Just imagine the consequences of

refusal—the king would be denounced and ridiculed and scorned at as being sinful for not standing up to protect the fire sacrifice of a sage.

Obeying the requests of selfless sages and hermits was obligatory, as was to honour one's word given to them. The king has already promised to help Vishwamitra and fulfill his desires, so to rescind on his words now by refusing to send Ram and Laxman with the sage would be an unforgivable sin.

Vishwamitra was an enlightened sage; he knew what was in store for Lord Ram if he accompanied him. It was during this trip that the Lord's marriage with Sita would be formalized. This would be a cause of celebration and establish Lord Ram as a prince of matchless strength and prowess—because this marriage was centered on a strict competition in which anyone who lifted and stringed the formidably strong bow of Lord Shiva, that was kept in the custody of Sita's father, king Janak, was to marry her. All the great kings and princes of the time would be invited, and all of them would fail to move the bow. It would be then that Lord Ram, on the instructions of Vishwamitra, would lift, string and break this bow, thereby establishing his identity as the greatest prince on earth. Where else would one get this golden chance to establish himself and gain fame throughout the world except in an assembly where all the great kings and princes have gathered together under one roof?

Then, Lord Ram and Laxman would be killing ferocious demons from whom even the Gods ran away in terror. This would be another reason for establishing the brothers' fame and glories.

A third development was waiting to happen. Sage Gautam's wife Ahilya was turned into a stone by a curse. When Lord Ram would touch her with his feet, she would regain her original form and be freed from this curse. This incident would establish that Lord Ram had supernatural mystical powers, that he was not an ordinary mortal. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-12—to Doha no. 211.

Which father would not like his son to achieve these successes? Dasrath did not know all this. This is precisely why Vishwamitra advised him to discard his ignorance and delusions. The king must realise that the prince whom he treats as his 'son' is not a human being like the king himself, but the Supreme Being in a personified form. So, the sage told him to wake up from his day-dreaming and become realistic.

A very interesting interpretation can be made of the sage telling Dasrath that 'they will also be blessed'. The sage did not specify who he means by 'they'. The king had four sons, so the sage meant that the two brothers who would accompany him would indeed be blessed, but this blessing would extend to cover the other two, Bharat and Shatrughan, also. This is because all the four brothers would be married simultaneously at Janakpur. This prospect should be sufficient to excite the father, king Dasrath, so thought the sage. But we will now read that the opposite happened. The deluded and ignorant king did not understand the import of the sage's words, and flatly refused to oblige him.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/50.]

चौ०. सुनि राजा अति अप्रिय बानी । हृदय कंठ मुख दुति कुमुलानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sunī rājā ati apriya bānī. hṛdaya kampa mukha duti kumulānī. 1.

When the king heard these most unwelcome words (request) of the sage, his heart shivered (shook) with shock and the brightness of his face faded. (1)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/51, stanza no. 1.

The king was shocked and dismayed beyond imagination, and he was dumbfounded. He had never expected the sage to make such a demand which no father will like to hear. His face that sported a smile earlier suddenly became sullen and gloomy. His heart quivered at the thought of sending his beloved sons to the forest with a hermit to face ferocious demons. Which father would love to hear it?

See the following verses and their accompanying notes.]

चौथेंपन पायउँ सुत चारी । बिप्र बचन नहिं कहेहु बिचारी ॥ २ ॥

cauthēmpana pāya'um̐ suta cārī. bipra bacana nahim kahēhu bicārī. 2.

The king said, 'Oh sage! I have got four sons during my old age. You did not think over the matter before speaking and making this demand from me. (2)

[Note—The king had become very old, and according to the Purans he was sixty thousand years old when he was blessed with the four sons. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 10.

After ruling the kingdom for such a long time he was worried that he had no heirs. So he had summoned sage Sringi who performed a son-begetting fire sacrifice which resulted in the Fire God manifesting himself and offering some sweet porridge sanctified by Mantras to Dasrath with the instructions that the latter should make his three chief queens eat it. The king followed the instructions, and in due course of time the four sons were born to his queens. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Doha no. 192.

A son is a source of great comfort, solace and support for a father, especially during his old age. Dasrath was a king, and he was preparing to anoint Lord Ram, his eldest son, on the throne. At this juncture sage Vishwamitra came and demanded that Ram and his brother Laxman be sent to the forest to fight demons. The king was extremely worried; demons are not human enemies who could be easily defeated and killed. They were known to be very fierce and cruel, and would perform magical feats during the heat of battle which stun even veteran warriors. Ram and Laxman had no experience of entering into such a battle; in fact they had yet not been trained in the art of warfare. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 7.

Pitting young, delicate and inexperienced princes who have never witnessed hardships of any kind in their lives against ruthlessly cruel demons will be an absurd proposition and would be tantamount to throwing them willingly to a pack of hungry wolves. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208.

Besides this, Lord Ram had not even reached sixteen years of age. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 2.

The king's worries were compounded because the sage wished to take only the two boys, Ram and Laxman, and did not request that the army accompany them. This was like throwing the two young inexperienced princes to hungry wolves to tackle them alone. This very idea sent shivers through the spine of Dasrath.

So he remarked that the sage had not given due thought and was not being practical before making the request.]

मागहु भूमि धेनु धन कोसा । सर्बस देउँ आजु सहरोसा ॥ ३ ॥
 देह प्रान तेँ प्रिय कछु नाहीँ । सोउ मुनि देउँ निमिष एक माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

māgahu bhūmi dhēnu dhana kōsā. sarbasa dē'um' āju saharōsā. 3.
 dēha prāna tēm priya kachu nāhīm. sō'u muni dē'um' nimiṣa ēka māhīm. 4.

‘Ask me for land, cows, wealth and anything else—I will be glad to give you cheerfully whatever you demand. In fact, I will willingly give to you all that I have.’¹ [3]

One’s own body as well as the Pran is the dearest possession one has. I will willingly give both of them to you in an instant if you so want.² [4] (3-4)

[Note—¹The king had earlier promised the sage that he will give the latter whatever he asks for. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207.

So the king offered everything he had—his wealth, his possessions, his entire kingdom by way of land—lest the sage would accuse him of being a liar and rescinding on his words of honour. He was even willing to die for the sake of the sage—i.e. he was willing to accompany the sage to fight the demons himself, or if the sage curses him to die he was willing to accept it. But the king pleaded, ‘don’t force me to part with my beloved son Ram and his brother Laxman; I can’t cope with this demand.’

Remember: the king was under the spell of the Lord’s Maya (powers of creating delusions and imposing ignorance which eclipses all wisdom and intelligence). The learned sage was well aware of this face—as he had asked the king to overcome these negative influences. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 207. But the Maya of the Lord is so powerful that no matter how much one teaches someone who is under its spell, such advice will have no effect on him.

The king was acting like an ordinary father and a worldly man. For he had forgotten who Ram actually was, and why the Lord had become his son.

When he asked the sage to request for cows, wealth, land etc. he meant to tell the sage that this is normally what alms seekers and Brahmins demand. No one asks the host to give his two sons to him like what Vishwamitra has demanded. It’s absurd to ask someone to part with his sons; no one should expect anyone to meet such a demand.

²The word ‘Pran’ means one’s life. So the king offered himself to the sage—he offered to accompany the sage and fight the demons himself. He did not fear being killed for the sake of the sage and protecting his fire sacrifice. This was in answer to the sage’s suggestion that if the king fulfills his needs—which was to help him complete the fire sacrifice which was interrupted by the demons—then he, the king, would get immense fame as one who contributes willingly for an auspicious act. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 207.

In the eventuality that he might be killed while fighting the demons on behalf of the sage, he still would have no worries in his mind because Lord Ram and his other brothers would automatically take up the responsibility of taking care of the kingdom. Besides this, the king would go down in history as having laid his life for a noble cause, and especially fighting for the cause of a renowned Brahma-rishi of the exalted stature of sage Vishwamitra.

‘But just imagine what would happen to him in the unfortunate moment if something wrong goes and Ram is mortally wounded’, the king implicitly asked the sage. ‘Say sage’, the king implied, ‘what would happen to an old father whose dearest and eldest son

is harmed and seriously wounded in battle? How will he comfort himself in his last days?']

सब सुत प्रिय मोहि प्रान कि नाई । राम देत नहिं बनइ गोसाई ॥ ५ ॥
कहँ निसिचर अति घोर कठोरा । कहँ सुंदर सुत परम किसोरा ॥ ६ ॥

saba suta priya mōhi prāna ki nā'īm. rāma dēta nahim bana'i gōsā'īm. 5.
kaham' nisicara ati ghōra kaṭhōrā. kaham' sundara suta parama kisōrā. 6.

‘All the sons are equally dear to me; they are as dear to me as my own Pran—my own life. So, oh revered sage, it is not possible for me to part with Ram.’¹ [5]

On the one hand are the ruthlessly cruel demons, and on the other hand are these beautiful and delicate princes who have neither attained adulthood nor have ever experienced any sort of hardship and cruelty anytime in life; therefore they are no match for such demons.² [6]’ (5-6)

[Note—¹The king was apprehensive that after his reluctance and refusal to part with Lord Ram because he loved him so much and also because he was the eldest son who is the heir to the throne, the sage might make another demand—that if the king finds it difficult to send Ram with him, then he can send one of the other three sons.

After all, the king has four sons. Had he only one son, the sage would have been morally forced to accede to his arguments that it is impossible for a father to part with his only son. But since he has three other sons besides Ram, it would be well neigh impossible to refuse the sage’s demand if he asks the king to send any one of them as per his own choice.

So to pre-empt this eventuality the king told the sage that all his sons are equally dear to him. That is, ‘Please do not ask me to send a replacement for Ram.’ Earlier the king has offered his own body as well as the ‘Pran’ to help sage Vishwamitra. Now he says that the sons are dear to him like his own ‘Pran’, and he cannot part with them. On the surface these two statements seem contradictory. They aren’t. What the king meant is this—‘Sage, for a man his sons are both a part of his body as well as his Pran. This is because the sons are produced through the medium of the body of the father, they are like an image of the father, and as a proof they carry the physical features of the father. The son carries the genes of the father, and in symbolic terms the father transfers his life forces into the body of the son at the time of the latter’s conception.

So here Dasrath clearly means that when he accompanies sage Vishwamitra himself, it will be equivalent to all the four sons going with the sage!

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/49, stanza no. 2.

²The two princes had not even attained sixteen years of age. They had never seen demons in life. Demons were no ordinary opponents or enemies. They were fearsome to look at; they were not only simply cruel but were ruthlessly blood-thirsty and man-eaters. To make young inexperienced princes face such creatures would be tantamount to willingly throwing them to hungry pack of wolves, into the jaws of certain death. The two princes would be scared to death by the mere sight of ferocious and colossus demons.]

सुनि नृप गिरा प्रेम रस सानी । हृदयँ हरष माना मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ७ ॥

sunī nṛpa girā prēma rasa sānī. hr̥dayam̐ haraṣa mānā muni gyānī. 7.

When the learned sage heard the king's words soaked in love and affection, he felt happy in his heart (i.e. was pleased internally). (7)

[Note—Why was the sage 'happy' instead of getting annoyed and angry at the king for his refusal to give Lord Ram? Well, the sage was delighted because he agreed that one should indeed have this kind of love for the Lord, a love in which one prefers to die and suffer the horrible consequences of inviting curses and punishments but not yielding an inch as far as the object of his adoration is concerned. No matter what pressure is exerted on a true lover and devotee of the Lord, he would not abandon his commitment of dedication, love and devotion for his beloved Lord. A true devotee of Lord Ram will willingly face the wrath and ridicule of the world for his faith and devotion and love for the Lord. So the learned sage was pleased internally; he expected this sort of response from the king.

The sage knew the level of devotion and love the king had for the Lord because when he had done severe Tapa in his previous life as king Manu, he had spurned all offers of all sorts of boons for being success in the Tapa. Instead, he had asked Lord Vishnu that he wishes to have him as his son so that he can shower his love and affection on him in the best and the closest form ever possible. Only when the Lord becomes his physical son would Manu be able to play with him while the Lord frolics around him, lift the Lord on his lap and kiss him affectionately to his heart's content, eat with him and feed him with his own hands, and watch the Lord till his eyes were full of this divine sight. None of this is possible in a formal atmosphere of a man interacting with a God; it is possible only when the Lord becomes his physical son because all formalities and decorum are now erased. Now the devotee can love his Lord as much and in a way he wants just like a doting father loves and pampers his dearest son.

The wise sage empathized with the king and knew how difficult it is for a father to part with his beloved young sons, especially when he knows that they would have to face cruel savages and blood-thirsty enemies. Vishwamitra was also a father before he renounced his family life, and therefore he understood the pain, and hence the fear and reluctance, in the heart of Dasrath. Therefore he did not get angry on Dasrath for his refusal to allow the two brother to accompany Vishwamitra.

At this point of time, sage Vasistha intervened. He explained the pros and the cons to king Dasrath, and managed to bring him around to the idea of agreeing to Vishwamitra's proposal.]

तब बसिष्ठ बहुबिधि समुझावा । नृप संदेह नास कहँ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

taba basiṣṭa bahubidhi samujhāvā. nṛpa sandēha nāsa kaham̐ pāvā. 8.

Then sage Vasistha, the royal priest, intervened and he pleaded with the king (on behalf of sage Vishwamitra), explaining the things to him in various ways (i.e. from different angles, making him aware of the reality and enlightening him about the pros and cons of sending Lord Ram with Vishwamitra along with the consequences of stubborn refusal). This advice removed all doubts that the king had. (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/51, stanza no. 2 also.

Sage Vasistha was not an ordinary priest; he was the son of Brahma the creator. He was highly respected, and when he intervened on behalf of sage Vishwamitra, pleading

with the king to accede to the sage's requests and send Lord Ram and Laxman with him as demanded by him, the king thought things over and decided that he must obey. This is because he had great faith in Vasistha and knew that the latter would never advise him anything that was detrimental for his welfare.

Further, if the king still refused then he would have crossed the red-line of indiscipline because he would have disobeyed two great sages. The king realised that he was about to commit the greatest mistake of his life by being irrationally stubborn, and the consequences will be disastrous. No one would protect him should the two sages become angry. The king realised that the anger of the two sages would be more ruinous than the wrath of all the demons taken together—for the simple reason that while he would have the protection of two powerful sages against the wrath of the demons if he agreed to their requests and pleased them, he would lose this protective shield if he remains stubborn. This would have horrendous consequences for the entire kingdom because his enemies would get the wind of this development and they would seize the opportunity to attack him from all sides. This is what exactly happened earlier in the case of another great king by the name of Pratapbhanu. He was an emperor and had all the kings subdued by force. But once, due to certain developments, the Brahmins had cursed him that his entire family would be ruined along with the kingdom. When the conquered kings got the wind of this development, they got a chance to attack Pratapbhanu because they knew that under this curse he is most certain to be defeated, and they would be victorious. As it happened, Pratapbhanu's kingdom was destroyed and he died in ignominy as a defeated and fallen emperor. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 175. The curse and the destruction of Pratapbhanu's kingdom is specifically narrated in (i) Doha no. 173; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 174; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

So, when Dasrath remembered this story—or rather we can safely presume that sage Vasistha must have reminded him of it because we read that he explained the things to the king in a variety of ways from different angles—he must have become terrified of the consequences of refusing to send Ram with Vishwamitra.

Vasistha must have also told him many other facts that the king had forgotten under the influence of Maya—(i) that in his previous life he was king Manu who had done Tapa to have Lord Vishnu as his son, and that therefore Ram was Lord Vishnu personified; (ii) that Vishnu had promised the Gods and the Earth that he will take birth in the household of the king of Ayodhya because he has already promised him to do so, and then he would eliminate the demons who had been tormenting them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 152; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187 respectively.

It must be noted that Vasistha must have taken the king to some private place to discuss the matter with him; he surely must not have done it in open court. It is a standard practice that a senior Authority consults his advisors in private, and not in full public view. Vasistha must have done it to avoid any unpleasant development should there be an argument between him and the king, and to avoid the chance of the assembly become aware of what he told the king; it was supposed to be a secret meeting between the king and his senior most advisor, sage Vasistha.

The sage would have also told him the good things that beckon Lord Ram if he goes to the forest with Vishwamitra—such as the sure chance of Vishwamitra teaching Ram and Laxman the great secrets and the art of warfare. This would be a rare opportunity for the two brothers because Vishwamitra was the greatest expert of his time in this field. Besides this, great fame and praises awaited Ram and Laxman as they are sure to

eliminate the demons because they have the protection of a renowned sage of the stature of Vishwamitra who was an invincible Kshatriya king before he attained the exalted stature of Brahmin-hood. This would help to establish Ram and Laxman as the greatest warriors of all times.

During this discussion sage Vasistha must have surely told king Dasrath—in order to convince him in favour of obeying Vishwamitra and to allay his fears about the safety of his two sons Ram and Laxman while they are in the custody of the sage—about the stupendous glory and the astounding mystical powers that Vishwamitra possessed. Sage Vasistha saw suppressed anger in the eyes of Vishwamitra, though externally the latter kept his calm. So the former sage feared for the worst; he knew about the sort of anger that Vishwamitra had, and no one can be sure that he won't curse the king. Vasistha had not forgotten that it is the same Vishwamitra who had killed all his hundred sons in the fight for the Kamdhenu cow without having any kind of regret. Therefore it was his moral duty as the royal priest to bring his patron king to his senses before disaster struck. Hence, Vasistha decided to talk with the king in private and explain to him the pros and cons of the situation.

Among other things, sage Vasistha reminded the king that his family is famous for its charitable nature and its reputation of honouring the word given to others. This time the king has promised a renowned sage that he will fulfill his desires, and now to go back on his own words of honour will boomerang upon him with full force of ignominy as well as the unforgivable sin of telling a lie to a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra. Even if Vishwamitra excuses him, the laws of Dharma (i.e. the natural laws of righteous and proper conduct) will not spare him from punishment. The king is bound to suffer if he refuses to oblige sage Vishwamitra by sending Ram and Laxman with him.

Vishwamitra was a Brahma-rishi and not an ordinary hermit. If he is pleased, then great boons and blessings are in store for the king, his sons and the kingdom. On the other hand, if his displeased horrendous consequences loom on the horizon.

Vasistha must have told Dasrath—'Look king. You have become old; how long do you think you will protect your sons? Vishwamitra is a Brahm-rishi who will live for thousands and thousands of years. You are simply a king, and there are numerous kings like you on this earth, no matter how high and powerful you may think yourself to be. Your strength, powers and authority are no match for Vishwamitra. If he is pleased and extends his patronage and protection to your sons and the kingdom, take it from me oh king that you will be sure that no enemy, howsoever strong and powerful he may be, will ever dare to raise his eyes against you, your kingdom and your sons. On the contrary, if Vishwamitra is antagonized, and your enemies get the wind of it, then no power on earth would be able to shield you. And by the way remember this: don't expect much from me either for I am no match for Vishwamitra. I have myself lost a hundred sons in confrontation with him earlier. So beware of your actions. You will have no time to regret later on. Don't be foolish to let this opportunity slip your hand: Vishwamitra does not come requesting often at the drop of a hat like other Brahmins, he rarely ventures out of his hermitage. So this is a golden chance for you to get his blessings and come under his protection. For the sake of your own good and welfare, don't lose this chance. Refusal to oblige the sage will invite horrible aftermath for you, I warn you; don't blame me later on.

And remember oh king the age-old wisdom: It is said that if a minister, a doctor and a guru (teacher, guide, advisor and moral preceptor) speaks to please his king, patient and disciple or follower respectively because of their powerful position and fear of retribution by annoying them if they don't like the advise given to them, then most certainly the latter would come to ruin (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 37). In other words, I must not become your 'yes man', but tell you what is good for you.

You have appointed me as your royal priest and moral advisor, and I must do my duty by giving you a sane and wise advise, not something that you will like to hear but something I think is good for you. And in the present context, the best of your interests would be served by honouring the wishes of the great sage Vishwamitra.'

All these arguments made Dasrath change his mind. He realised his folly, and immediately rectified his wrong-doing by summoning Ram and Laxman and handing them over to sage Vishwamitra.]

अति आदर दोउ तनय बोलाए । हृदयँ लाइ बहु भाँति सिखाए ॥ ९ ॥

ati ādara dō'u tanaya bōlā'ē. hṛdayam' lā'i bahu bhāmṭi sikhā'ē. 9.

The king then called¹ the two sons (Ram and Laxman) and affectionately clasped them to his bosom. Then he advised them in many ways² (like a loving father is expected to give guidance to his beloved sons before he sends them with someone else to an unknown place). (9)

[Note—¹An interesting thing has happened here. The two princes were “called” by Dasrath. One calls someone if he is not present at the site. This is obviously not the case because when Vishwamitra had come the king had summoned all the four brothers to bow before the sage to pay respect to him. It would be extremely impolite if the brothers had gone away while Vishwamitra was still sitting in the royal court. So they stood in attendance near their father. If this is indeed the case, then where is the question of “calling” the two brothers?

The answer lies in the fact that Vasistha had taken king Dasrath aside into a private chamber to discuss the matter of his outright rejection of Vishwamitra's request for sending Lord Ram and Laxman with him as explained in a note to verse no. 8 above. When Vasistha was successful in convincing Dasrath that it will be proper to accept sage Vishwamitra's requests and send Ram and Laxman with him, the king then “called” the two sons in that antechamber to confide with them his decision.

Remember: just a short time ago the king had flatly refused to send his two sons with Vishwamitra, and all the sons were witness to this refusal. Now suddenly the king has changed track; he is now willing to send them. So it was necessary to “call” the two sons aside in a private chamber to take them into confidence and to explain to them the reasons and circumstances of the change. It could not be done openly in public; it would make the king look ridiculous.

²Like sage Vasistha explaining to Dasrath the pros and cons of accepting the request of Vishwamitra, the king too explained the situation to his two sons in detail to convince them why he had changed his decision as well as to emphasize to them that this change is for their own good and welfare. This is what any other father would also do. After all, Ram and Laxman were not spoon-fed children; they had grown up and needed to be taken into confidence.

All the reservations and doubts that Lord Ram and Laxman might have had needed to be addressed and they be assured of protection and well-being when they were told to go with an unknown sage to an unknown place. This had to be done in private to maintain decorum of open court; everything cannot be discussed in public.

What might the king have told or advised them? Well, there may have been many things one can think of—he told his sons about the stupendous mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra, he advised them to treat the sage with the greatest of respect, to treat him like their own father, to obey his commands without second thoughts or questions, that

they must think that they are going out on an excursion under the protection of a powerful guardian, sage Vishwamitra, and therefore they must enjoy every moment of it, that they will come back soon and so there is no need to feel homesick, and so on and so forth.

It was a moment of parting, so it is obvious and natural that at that moment the loving father would affectionately embrace his dear sons.

Then after all this, what happened next? All of them—i.e. Dasrath, Vasistha, Ram and Laxman—came out of the king's private chambers back into the open court where Vishwamitra and others were waiting for them. This is obvious in the next line.]

मेरे प्रान नाथ सुत दोऊ । तुह मुनि पिता आन नहिं कोऊ ॥ १० ॥

mērē prāna nātha suta dō'ū. tumha muni pitā āna nahim kō'ū. 10.

The king told sage Vishwamitra—‘These two sons are like my Pran (i.e. they are extremely dear to me just like a man loves his life). Oh sage, you are no one else but their own father. They do not have anyone else to protect them (in the forest, away from the kingdom) except you (just like they have no one else to protect them except me while they are in the kingdom). [So, please take special care of them; give them the love a father gives his sons. They are now in your custody and guardianship. It's your responsibility to protect them and take care of their well-being.]’ (10)

[Note—Here, the wise king made Vishwamitra obliged to protect Lord Ram and Laxman by telling him that he is their father. Vishwamitra has already seen how much Dasrath loves them, so Dasrath implied that he expects the same love and affection from him for Ram and Laxman. A special bond was created now; a special responsibility befell on the shoulders of the great wise sage Vishwamitra.

Remember: It was not Dasrath coming to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra with a request to keep his sons with him to train them on the scriptures or to teach them the art and skill of warfare for which the sage was famous. It was the other way round—it was Vishwamitra coming to Dasrath with the request to send his two sons with him.

Therefore, Vishwamitra was morally bound to accept certain conditions which Dasrath made before he handed over his two precious sons to him. And this condition was so sublime, free from any deceit or conceit, as well as heart-touching that even if the sage had wanted he would not have been able to gather the moral and ethical courage to refuse—‘to act like a father for two innocent, inexperienced princes, who had yet not seen or witnessed the harsh realities of life, while they were in his custody in a far away alien land and culture’.

Surely, Vishwamitra's heart must have boiled-over with surging waves of love and affection for the two brothers as soon as he heard the word “father” being used for himself. Not only this, whatever hidden annoyance he might have had for Dasrath for his initial reluctance also vanished in thin air.

A very interesting thing can be deduced on the sidelines of the text. There are ten (10) lines in this set of Chaupais—i.e. there are ten lines between Doha nos. 207 and 208. The significance is this: Lord Ram is the Supreme Being in a personified form; he is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the Upanishads. Without this Consciousness there is nothing in this creation; sans the Consciousness the creation is a lifeless void. That is, without Lord Ram the world is equivalent to ‘zero’. Lord Ram is the only ‘one’ entity, as the cosmic Consciousness, that lends meaning and essence to this entire

existence just like the case of the digit ‘one’ lending a ten-fold value to ‘zero’ when it is added to the latter. Otherwise, the ‘zero’ means nothing.

Hence, from the metaphysical and spiritual angle these ten lines indicate that Lord Ram is the ‘Pran’ of this creation, he is the ‘very life-force and essence’ of this creation. If we look now about what Dasrath says for Ram, the meaning would become clear. The body of a man is useless if there is no life—or Pran—in it; so the world is also useless if one removes the Lord from it. And on the other hand, with the same logic, the world assumes manifold meaning and use for someone who sees the Lord everywhere just like the case of the digit ‘one’ being used to add value to the ‘zero’.]

दो०. सौंपे भूप रिषिहि सुत बहुबिधि देइ असीस ।

जननी भवन गए प्रभु चले नाइ पद सीस ॥ २०८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

saumpē bhūpa riṣihi suta bahubidhi dē'i asīsa.

jananī bhavana ga'e prabhu calē nā'i pada sīsa. 208 (a).

The king liberally blessed the sons (Lord Ram and Laxman) in various ways, and then handed over their charge (guardianship) to the sage (Vishwamitra). The Lord went to his mother's palace, bowed his head before her to seek her blessing and permission, and then started on his journey (with sage Vishwamitra). (Doha no. 208 Ka)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/51, stanza no. 2 also.

The king invoked many Gods and blessed his two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman profusely with their Mantras. He silently prayed to all the Gods to look after the welfare of his two beloved sons whom he is parting with for the first time in his life.

The king had told sage Vishwamitra that now onwards he is their father. So in essence the king held the hands of Lord Ram and Laxman and handed over them to their ‘foster-father’. It is a normal custom that when one hands someone who is very dear to him to another person, he blesses him all the best of wishes. It's a courteous way of parting with someone.

Lord Ram, and of course Laxman also though he is not specifically mentioned here, went to take formal permission of their respective mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively. Laxman is understood by default because the sage had asked for both the brothers.

The Lord hurried through his meeting with the mother lest she would ask him a lot of uncomfortable questions—such as where was he going, what was the purpose of the journey, etc. In such a case the Lord would be in a fix—he could not lie, and if he disclosed the truth that he is going out of the kingdom on foot with a sage to help him protect his fire sacrifice against ruthless demons, then there was all probability that the mother would throw tantrums and try to stop him, creating another scene much more theatrical than how the father behaved.

Another reason is that the Lord did not want to give the impression that he was unwilling to go with the sage and could not say ‘no’ to his father in open court, so he has gone to hide behind his mother, pleading with her to do something to prevent him from going. Delay would mean that some kind of brief or detailed discussion transpired between the son and the mother wherein the mother somehow reassured her son and encouraged him not to be afraid but be brave and go ahead.

So, the Lord wasted no time in the mother's palace.

A question arises—why was the mother not reluctant to allow Lord Ram to go with sage Vishwamitra? When the sage arrived and expressed the reason for his visit it was done openly, and not secretly. So it is not possible that the queens had no knowledge of what the sage wanted. The answer lies in verse no. 17, stanza no. 5 of Baal Kand of Geetwali, another wonderful book written by Tulsidas. It is said there that once a soothsayer had come to visit Ayodhya. The queen mother asked him to tell her about the future of her son, the child Ram. The wise man had foretold her that one day sage Vishwamitra would come and take him away on the pretext of protecting his fire sacrifice, but that later on Ram will be married with Sita during the same visit. So the mother was in the know of the good things that were to happen. Therefore she was more than willing to give her permission.

Besides this, the mother had some idea of the mystical nature of her son, Lord Ram. Two specific incidents point to this fact. At the time of birth of Lord Ram, the mother had a clear vision of Lord Vishnu manifesting himself with all the dazzle and splendour of thousands of suns before her. She had been blinded, and had prayed to Lord Vishnu to discard this superhuman form and become an ordinary human child. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 192.

Another incident occurred when the Lord was still a child. One day the mother put him to bed in his crib and went to her deity's worship room to offer prayers. She found that Ram was enjoying the food meant as offering for the deity. She rushed back to the crib and found him sleeping peacefully. The mother felt dazed; she rushed to and fro and could not believe her eyes or her self at the magical sight she saw. It was then that the Lord had shown her his true cosmic, all-pervading form of the 'Viraat Purush'. Mother Kaushalya fell at the feet of Lord Ram and pleaded with him never to show these wonders to her as she feels terrified and would die of shock or would faint. In other words, mother Kaushalya knew who Ram actually was. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201—to Doha no. 202.

In contrast, Dasrath had no such divine experience. This is the fundamental reason why Dasrath was reluctant but the mother wasn't to let Lord Ram accompany sage Vishwamitra.]

सो०. पुरुषसिंह दोउ बीर हरषि चले मुनि भय हरन।

कृपासिंधु मतिधीर अखिल बिस्व कारन करन॥ २०८ (ख)॥

sōraṭhā.

puruṣasimha dō'u bīra haraṣi calē muni bhaya harana.

krpāsindhu matidhīra akhila bisva kārana karana. 208 (b).

The two brave warriors (Ram and Laxman) were like lions among men. They cheerfully went with the sage to remove the cause of his fears.¹ *

The Lord (Sri Ram) is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace. He is of a steady and resolute mind and determination. And he is the fundamental cause of the being (existence) of the whole world.² (Sortha no. 208 Kha)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 1 also.

The Lord was about to face a huge army of ferocious demons. He was cheerful when he started on the journey with sage Vishwamitra though he knew fully well that he is not going on a picnic. This is why he is compared to a 'lion'. The lion is the king of the

jungle; he is not terrified at the sight of a horde of wild elephants. A single lion can enter the horde of wild elephants fearlessly, jump on their back, and kill them one by one by tearing at their heads.

Likewise, Lord Ram was not scared at the prospect of having to face the demons. Hence, he is compared to the lion.

It is clearly said that there are ‘two brave warriors who were like lions among men’. Hence, both Lord Ram as well as Laxman were equally strong and powerful.

²Three adjectives have been used here to qualify Lord Ram—(i) he is an ocean of mercy and compassionate, (ii) he is steadfast and resolute, and (iii) he is the cause of the coming into being of the world. All of them have relevance here.

The Lord will kill the demons not because he loves bloodshed or war, but he, being the Supreme Lord of this creation, has to ensure that all other creatures who are being endlessly and without rhyme or reason tormented and harassed by the cruel demons must be protected and allowed to live in peace. The demons won’t mend their ways, so the Lord has no choice. But at the same time he will ensure that none of the demons killed by him go to hell because of their evil deeds. In other words, all the demons who Lord Ram killed got liberation and deliverance for their souls—that is, their souls were freed from the evil body of a demon and found emancipation and salvation. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 114.

The same idea is expressed in another context—when Lord Ram used to hunt, the deer or any other animals that were shot by the Lord left their gross mortal bodies and went to the heaven where the Gods live. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 205.

Lord Vishnu had come down to earth to eliminate the burden of demons, and the Lord will leave no stone unturned to accomplish his mission. He had declared this in no uncertain terms that “I raise my hands and declare that I will make the earth free from the tyranny of demons”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9.

By emphasizing the Lord’s cosmic form as the Supreme Being and Creator of the entire universe, it is stressed that the reader must mentally prepare himself to understand the hidden meaning and draw subtler inferences from the miraculous events that were about to unfold. Let the reader be warned that he must see the incidents in the context of the fact that the protagonist is not an ordinary human being but the Supreme Being himself, for otherwise he would become highly skeptical about the authenticity and the truth of the magical events that will now happen in one after another.

*It ought to be noted here that king Dasrath did not send his army or even helpers with his sons whom he loved so much and for whom he was so much worried inspite of being fully aware that they are going to fight demons. Well, when sage Vasistha enlightened him about the astounding potentials and powers of sage Vishwamitra, the king became reassured about the security of his two sons. If he had proposed to send army troops with Ram and Laxman it would mean that he had no confidence on sage Vishwamitra’s ability to protect the two princes. That would be highly offensive and insulting for the mighty sage. It would have had disastrous consequences: Vishwamitra, who was already smarting by the king’s initial refusal to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him, would have been further angered and his emotions ruffled the wrong way. It would have inflamed his annoyance with the king, and it would have been tantamount to publicly undermining the sage’s powers, strength and abilities. Therefore, the king was wise enough to keep quiet and not inflame things further by proposing to send troops or attendants with Ram and Laxman.

Another reason is that no warning should be given to the demons who were tormenting sage Vishwamitra that they are about to be killed. This was sure to happen if a

huge army assembled at the hermitage of the sage. The demons would be forewarned, and they wouldn't come to attack. So how would they be destroyed? It was therefore prudent to keep a low profile so that they are trapped. With only two young boys guarding the fire sacrifice, the demons would have no suspicion of what was in store for them as compared to the sight of a huge army doing the job.

Though no dates are mentioned here, it is believed in tradition that sage Vishwamitra had arrived at Ayodhya on the 9th day of the dark lunar fortnight of the Hindu month of Aashwin which is the 7th month that commences when the sun enters the constellation of Virgo that corresponds to mid of September, and departed with the two brothers on 12th day of the month. In other words, he stayed at Ayodhya for 3 days.]

चौ० अरुन नयन उर बाहु बिसाला । नील जलज तनु स्याम तमाला ॥ १ ॥
कटि पट पीत कसैं बर भाथा । रुचिर चाप सायक दुहुँ हाथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aruna nayana ura bāhu bisālā. nīla jalaja tanu syāma tamālā. 1.
kaṭi paṭa pīta kasēm bara bhāthā. rucira cāpa sāyaka duhum' hāthā. 2.

[The wonderful beauty and the bewitching charm of the Supreme Lord's physical form are being described now.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) had bewitching red-coloured eyes. His chest was broad and his arms were long and muscular. His body and countenance were dark blue like the colour of the dark rain-bearing clouds (or even the blue-coloured lotus flower) as well as the Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant). (1)

He had the Pitambar and a quiver wrapped around his waist. [The 'Pitambar' is a yellow silk seamless cloth that is wrapped around the body, especially the lower half around the waist and downwards. The quiver filled with arrows was tied to the Lord's waist.] He held a beautiful bow and arrows in his hands. (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza nos. 2-3; verse no. 1/53, stanza nos. 1-2; and verse no. 1/54, stanza nos. 1-2 also.]

The Lord's eyes are red because he is angry that some kind of misery has befallen sage Vishwamitra that had forced the otherwise calm and dispassionate sage to come and ask for help and succour. The Lord was angry at the demons.

Lord Ram is a personified form of Lord Vishnu who in turn is the 'Viraat Purush', the cosmic form of the Supreme Being whose countenance is likened to the colour of the sky when it is filled with rain-bearing clouds. This is an important metaphor and a significant symbolism. It means that Lord Vishnu is as vast as the sky, being all-pervading and all-encompassing. Nothing exists beyond the limit of the sky, and so nothing exists outside the Lord. The sky is inherently dark in the cosmic background; we see it as blue because of the physical phenomenon of scattering of light of the sun in the atmosphere of the earth. So, since Lord Vishnu has appeared on earth as Lord Ram though the Lord has a cosmic existence, both the colours—'dark' and 'blue' are used to describe the colour of the Lord's complexion in his manifestation as Lord Ram.

Comparison to the 'rain-bearing cloud' is made to emphasize that like this cloud which pours the life-sustaining rain upon the earth which would parch and all its creatures would die if there was no rain, Lord Vishnu too sustains and protects all forms of life in this creation.

The Tamaal tree (black catechu plant) is about 15-20 arms length in height. It grows on mountains as well as on the banks of river Yamuna. Its flowers are red in colour, and leaves dark green.

His chest and arms are well-formed and muscular; they are broad and long respectively indicating that he is a great warrior who can extend help beyond the scope of ordinary human beings. The ‘long arms’ of the Lord are especially indicative of this—that his reach is long and beyond measurement. The ‘broad chest’ is indicative of the fact that the Lord is very forgiving and compassionate; he welcomes all and accepts them, whether a friend or foe, with equal warmth but with one condition—and it is that the other person must surrender before the Lord with complete humility and dispassion.

Remember: The same Lord Ram who killed so many demons including their king Ravana had welcomed and accepted Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, as a member of his group when he had come to seek the Lord’s refuge and to surrender himself before him. At that time, Lord Ram had clearly declared that even if a creature had committed great sins, but if he comes to surrender himself and seek forgiveness from the Lord, he is most welcome and assured of the Lord’s patronage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Doha no. 44.

The presence of the quiver, bow and arrow indicate that Lord Ram is ready for battle with the demons. The Pitambar is symbolic of the fact that he is none else but Lord Vishnu as this cloth is the trademark apparel of the latter.

The three armaments of Lord Ram are his bow, arrow and the quiver. They are said to be ‘beautiful’. What is the beauty of them? The beauty or the glory or the special quality of the ‘bow’ is that it never gets broken, of the ‘arrow’ is that it never fails to hit the target, and of the ‘quiver’ is that it is never empty of arrows.]

स्याम गौर सुंदर दोउ भाई । बिस्वामित्र महानिधि पाई ॥ ३ ॥

syāma gaura sundara dō'u bhā'ī. bisvāmitra mahānidhi pā'ī. 3.

Sage Vishwamitra got a matchless (spiritual and divine) treasure in the form of the two beautiful (handsome, enchanting, captivating and wonderful) brothers (Ram and Laxman) who were respectively of a dark and fair complexion. (3)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/53, stanza no. 1, and verse no. 1/54, stanza no. 2 also.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and Laxman is an epitome of Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord. In the entire story of the Ramayan, Laxman has stood by the side of the Lord like a man’s shadow follows him wherever he goes. Laxman symbolizes that spiritual character which stands for complete and unquestioned dedication and submission for the Lord no matter what happens. That is why Laxman is as beautiful as the Lord himself. Lord Ram held Laxman dearest to his heart, he could not live without him to give us a message that the only character that pleases the Lord is to have devotion for him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precedes Doha no. 61 in which Lord Ram clearly declares that his life is useless without Laxman just like a serpent is without his Mani (the gem-like effervescent sac present on the hood of a special category of serpents without which they can’t see), and a bird is without its wings.

Lord Ram is the cosmic Consciousness known as the ‘Pran’ or the vital life sustaining force of creation. Without Pran and Consciousness there can be no life in this creation. What good is a dead world without life in it? What good is a granary without

eatable grains in it; what good is a treasury without saleable and cashable assets in it which can be sold and cashed to meet the owner's financial needs in cases of emergencies?

Hence, both Lord Ram and Laxman are 'beautiful' and 'like great treasury' for the lucky sage Vishwamitra.

The two colours 'dark' and 'fair' represent Lord Vishnu and his divine conch. Vishnu has the dark colour of the sky, and his conch is of a white colour. The cosmic sound of OM is said to have its origin in this conch. The conch, known as a 'Shankha' in Sanskrit, is a priceless gem produced by the ocean at the time of its churning by the demons and the gods in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss. The entire creation is said to have originated by the dynamic sound energy generated when this divine conch was sounded by Vishnu in his primary form as the Viraat Purush. In other words, while Lord Ram represents this Viraat Purush, Laxman represents the latter's conch which heralded the arrival of the Lord and the existence of his dynamic energy that would not only create but also sustain and protect the creation that was about to be created.

The word used in the text is 'Maha-Nidhi'. 'Nidhi' means an asset, and the prefix 'Maha' means 'great'. Hence, Lord Ram and Laxman are not merely assets for sage Vishwamitra, they are his 'great asset'. A man will never lose something that has immense value for him; sage Vishwamitra therefore decided that he has got the reward of all his Tapa in the form of the two brothers and he will protect them with his life. This is in answer to the king's request to take care of them like he was their own father.

Remember: King Dasrath had told the sage that he is willing to give him anything he wants—his whole treasury, his kingdom, cows etc., he even offered himself to the sage. But the king was unwilling to part with Ram and Laxman. True, because no one would willingly like to part with a 'Maha-Nidhi' that he values more than the rest of the assets he possesses. This 'Maha-Nidhi' which Dasrath held close to his heart has now been transferred to sage Vishwamitra. Hence it is apt to say that the great sage got the 'Maha-Nidhi' in the form of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman.

The very next line tells us why Vishwamitra treated Lord Ram as a 'Maha-Nidhi']

प्रभु ब्रह्मन्यदेव मैं जाना । मोहि निति पिता तजेउ भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

prabhu brahman'yadēva mair̥m jānā. mōhi niti pitā tajē'u bhagavānā. 4.

The sage told Lord Ram—'Oh Lord, I have realised that you are a 'Brahmanya-deva' ('prabhu brahman'yadēva')—i.e. you are the Lord who is worshipped and adored by the learned Brahmins. In other words, you are a personified form of 'Brahm', the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness of this creation. Oh Lord, you have left your father for my sake.

[So, I just can't find words to express my gratitude and thanks to you. I am extremely obliged and feel exemplarily happy and blissful. Thank you for giving me this honour!]
(4)

[Note—How did the wise sage realise that Ram was no ordinary prince but the Supreme Lord himself? Well, the hints are obvious. When the sage had disclosed that he wishes to take Lord Ram to fight ferocious demons who no one else dare face, an ordinary prince would have been scared out of his wits and tried all possible excuses to avoid going with the sage to willingly fall in this trap. It was no so with Ram; he cheerfully and excitedly accompanied the sage as if he was going out to play some game. The prospect of having

to face blood-thirst demons did not terrify him a bit. This is clearly because Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, knew that this was the very purpose why he had come down to earth, and so he was rather itching for this opportunity rather than running away from it.

Say, what could the sage have done if Ram himself had expressed his incompetence at fighting the demons—which under no imagination was an easy job? But the Lord willingly and cheerfully joined the sage with great confidence, not even asking him how big the demon and his army was, or what would other support he can expect in the battle, or whether the sage would help in the battle, and so on. This filled the sage not only with great admiration and gratitude for Lord Ram but also signaled to him that what he had thought before coming to Ayodhya was indeed true—i.e. Lord Vishnu had come in the form of Lord Ram to destroy the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 206.

This subtle hint was not lost on the enlightened sage Vishwamitra. He immediately realised the secret truth behind the external façade of Lord Ram's appearance as an ordinary human prince. The Lord had some great job to do, and he could not afford to waste time to respect the lovable emotions of his father Dasrath who has had sufficient time to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy of being near to the Lord as he had desired in his previous life as king Manu who had done Tapa to have the Lord as his son. The wheel of time waits for none; so Lord Ram cannot go on indefinitely playing the role of a child just to please the king when more important work was pending. Things had to be prioritized.]

चले जात मुनि दीन्हि देखार्इ । सुनि ताड़का क्रोध करि धार्इ ॥ ५ ॥
एकहिं बान प्राण हरि लीन्हा । दीन जानि तेहि निज पद दीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

calē jāta muni dīnhi dēkhā'ī. suni tāṛakā krōdha kari dhā'ī. 5.
ēkahim bāna prāna hari līnhā. dīna jāni tēhi nija pada dīnhā. 6.

While they were on the way to the sage's hermitage, the sage saw the demoness named Tadaaa. He showed her (pointed her out) to the Lord. As soon as Tadaaa heard the voice of the sage (pointed her out to Lord Ram), she attacked angrily.¹ (5)

The Lord (Sri Ram) took her life with a single arrow. Realizing that she was miserable and deserved mercy and compassion, the gracious Lord provided her soul the exalted stature of his own divine state—i.e. she was graced with liberation and deliverance, and her soul found emancipation and salvation.² (6)*

[Note—*Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6; and verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6.

¹The three—sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman—were talking with each other as they walked on the forest path. Their voices alerted Tadaaa who lunged forward to attack. As soon as she was within sight, the sage pointed her out to Lord Ram who wasted no time to shoot her down with a single arrow.

Remember: There was no time to procrastinate and shoot another arrow. So the Lord hit directly at her, killing her instantly.

²All the male and female demons had become such because of some curse they incurred due to their mischief or because of the evil deeds they had been doing in many of their previous lives. But their evil and sinful body harboured a soul, known as the Atma, which is inherently pure and which yearned to break free from this cage-like evil

body of a demon. The Atma could not succeed in it because the body continued to perpetrate its evil deeds which resulted in continued accumulation of punishment in the form of continuity of the evil body of a demon. Had any one of these demons mended their way and shunned doing evil deeds, their souls would have found automatic liberation as per the laws of Nature. But unfortunately it was not to be so.

To prove this point that if the demons had had the wisdom to mend their ways inspite of living in the body of a demon they would have found auspiciousness and welfare for their souls, we have a sterling example in the Ramayan itself—he is Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana, the king of the demon race. Vibhishan abhorred the life of a demon; he lived a life of a religious man. He worshipped Lord Vishnu and repeated the great Mantra “Ram” as prescribed in the Upanishads. This word “Ram” is said to be a ‘Tarak Mantra’—i.e. it is a spiritual formula which helps the soul to attain freedom from the body and the world, and find emancipation and salvation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 6.

The result was that he did find succour in the holy feet of Lord Ram, and the eternal kingdom of Lanka after the sinful demons were eliminated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Doha no. 49.

So, when Lord Ram killed the demoness Tadakaa, it was actually freeing her soul that was trapped in the evil body of a female demon. It was the physical gross body that was hit by the arrow, and not the subtle body which harbours the Atma. Once the gross body of Tadakaa, which is like a shell over the soft kernel, was ruptured by the Lord’s arrow, the soft inner-self spilled out, and the soul living inside it found its liberation.]

तब रिषि निज नाथहि जियँ चीन्ही । बिद्यानिधि कहँ बिद्या दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
जाते लाग न छुधा पिपासा । अतुलित बल तनु तेज प्रकासा ॥ ८ ॥

taba riṣi nija nāthahi jiyam̐ cīnhī. bidyānidhi kahum̐ bidyā dīnhī. 7.
jātē lāga na chudhā pipāsā. atulita bala tanu tēja prakāsā. 8.

Then the great sage recognized who his Lord actually was¹.

Once this awareness dawned upon the sage, he gave (taught) all the knowledge that he had to the ‘Lord of knowledge’, the Lord who was himself a treasury of knowledge (bidyānidhi)². (7)

This divine eclectic knowledge that the sage imparted to Lord Ram incorporated, inter alia, such mystical abilities as being able to overcome thirst and hunger, and it empowered the possessor of the knowledge with stupendous strength, astounding valour and super-human powers so much so that his glory and dynamism effused from him like a halo that lent his body a divine glow³. (8)

[Note—¹The sage has already told Lord Ram that he has realised who he was a little while ago in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 209 above. So, what happened that he had to say that he recognized the Lord again for the second time? Well, this is the mysterious way Lord’s Maya (delusion creating powers) acts. This Maya had the greatest of wise men held in its snare.

The sage had for some time forgotten the reality of who Lord Ram and Laxman were because of the fun, frolicking and child-like pranks that the two bothers had been playing with each other and with the sage while they were walking on the path to his hermitage. The sage’s hermitage was far away from the kingdom of Ayodhya.

Remember: the place where they saw Tadakaa was beyond the boundary of Ayodhya—for the simple reason that its king Dasrath would not have allowed her, or for that matter any other demon, to survive within his realm. Sage Vishwamitra's hermitage was in Magadh, a great distance from the kingdom of Ayodhya. So the three—i.e. the sage and the two brother—had been walking together for quite some time. During this journey, the Lord and his brother had acted like ordinary children of their age to provide the great sage the benefit of a lifetime—the same benefit, the same happiness and the same bliss that the Supreme Lord had given Dasrath by becoming his son and playing around in his household.

Dasrath had told the sage that now onwards he is like their 'father'. So, the sage too wanted to taste and enjoy the divine bliss that Dasrath may have got by acting as the 'father' of the Supreme Lord. Hence, the Lord decided to oblige the sage by casting his Maya upon the sage's intellect and wisdom, eclipsing them. The fun and frolic and enjoyments of the journey have been very vividly described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 53—56. Refer specifically to stanza no. 5 of verse no. 52 which says— "On the way, the two brothers would sometimes rush into a pond, or climb on a boulder to watch transfixed at the beauty of the forest dwelling birds, animals and trees. The sage got scared for their safety at this behaviour, and he would urgently call them back." Again, in stanza nos. 3-4 of verse no. 54 it is said that "The two boys make a lot of fun and do strange things as they walked along with the sage on the path. They pluck flowers and leaves from trees, and lotus along the banks of rivers and lakes on the way. Then they would drink cool water from these rivers and lakes and stand there relaxing for quite some time. They sit down on some boulders under the shade of some tree, adoring the scene, the shade and the soft breeze. The peacocks begin to dance when they watch the two brothers, and the birds such as the parrot and the cuckoo as well as the bumble bees sing merrily when they see the brothers."

All these things mesmerized the sage so much so that for many days he forgot who Ram was just like Dasrath who forgot who his son Ram actually was.

Then the reality struck upon Vishwamitra like lightening when Tadakaa came howling for his blood. He was shaken out of his dream. That is why he 'realised or recognized who Lord Ram was for the second time'.

It must be kept in mind that in order to understand the story of the Ramayan, we have to distil available information and peep behind the curtain to be able to visualize what actually must have been happening behind the scene. Though the outline of the story in all the versions of the Ramayan are similar, they differ in finer details.

²Sage Vishwamitra was an expert in the knowledge of warfare. He was a great warrior before becoming a sage. So, when he woke up from his day-dreaming he gladly initiated Lord Ram and taught him the intricacies of the science of warfare. This included the ability to overcome thirst and hunger because it was necessary for the future when Lord Ram and Laxman would have to spend long time wandering in the deep recesses of the forest during their exile and the journey that would culminate in the epic battle of Lanka where all the evil demons would be killed and eliminated.

Remember: This knowledge was transmitted to both Lord Ram as well as Laxman. The all-knowing sage was aware of the fact that Laxman would have to share the responsibility of eliminating the demons along with Lord Ram, so both had to be prepared for the job.

Since Lord Ram is the Supreme Being himself personified, it is said that he is the 'treasury of knowledge'. But now the Lord had to act normally like a human being, and so some formality of giving and accepting knowledge had to be fulfilled.

Earlier, when Lord had grown up and reached the age when a boy is sent to a teacher for his education, the Lord was sent to the hermitage of sage Vasistha in a routine manner

for his education. The Lord acquired knowledge rapidly in very short time. Really it is a wonder that the Lord whose breath constitutes the four Vedas, the primary scriptures that contain all the knowledge that exist in this creation, should learn and acquire knowledge from someone else, in this case his teacher sage Vasistha. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 204.

³Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6 also.]

दो०. आयुध सर्व समर्पि कै प्रभु निज आश्रम आनि ।
कंद मूल फल भोजन दीन्ह भगति हित जानि ॥ २०९ ॥

dōhā.

āyudha sarba samarpi kai prabhu nija āśrama āni.
kanda mūla phala bhōjana dīnha bhagati hita jāni. 209.

The sage submitted all his mystical weapons and the knowledge pertaining to their skillful use to the Lord¹, and then reverentially brought him to his hermitage².

At the hermitage, he offered edible roots and stems as well as fruits to the Lord with great devotion because he (the sage) had realised that the Lord is the best well-wisher of his devotees³. (Doha no. 209)

[Note—¹Here it means that the sage, who was renowned for his knowledge of the science and art of weapons and warfare, transferred that knowledge to Lord Ram and Laxman. It means that he taught them all that he knew in connection with the science and art of weapons, and how to invoke their Mantras and use them during warfare.

When Lord Ram had shot the ferocious female demon Tadaaka effortlessly with a single shot of an arrow, Vishwamitra was stunned and awe-struck. At that time he realised that Lord Ram was no ordinary warrior, for Tadaaka was a colossus demoness who resembled a flying serpent with thousands of hissing hoods.

This on the one hand filled the sage with great satisfaction that he was correct in thinking that Lord Ram would indeed be able to destroy the demons, but on the other hand he was humbled. Previously he had thought that there was no one on this earth who was more expert in archery and other forms of weaponry than he. But now it was like the case of a camel, which was proud of its tall frame, standing below a tall coconut tree or a lofty mountain whose summit kisses the sky. It was also like the case of a perennial river, which was proud of its endless content of water, seeing the mighty ocean.

The sage thought to himself that he be shamed. He calls himself a 'sage', but is so selfishly guarding the secret knowledge of weapons which ought to be used for the general good of the world by putting them into effect in the process of the elimination of the demons that would help to restore peace upon the earth. After all he knew that he won't use them anytime because he had taken a vow to be calm and serene and never to be angry and hurt anyone. This was the vow that prevented him from destroying the demons who had been tormenting him and defiling his fire sacrifices.

The sage has explained the reason himself in Valmiki's Ramayana where he said that he could not kill the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice because he had taken a vow of observing self-restraint, maintain mental calmness and serenity, and not being angry or wrathful on anyone while the sacrifice was in progress. If he punished the demons by cursing them, then it would violate this vow, and the whole exercise would be spoilt.

Refer: (i) Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 19, verse nos. 7-20; and (ii) Tulsidas' Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 47, stanza nos. 1-2, and verse no. 66, stanza no. 2.

Now therefore, sage Vishwamitra thought that it would be highly improper and selfish for him not to divulge this secret knowledge of weapons to Lord Ram and Laxman who he himself have selected to destroy the demon race. So he willingly taught the two brothers the secret of all the mystical weapons which could be immediately summoned and used at the opportune moment when they were required to be employed.

These weapons were not physical weapons, but mystical ones that relied on invocation of respective Mantras, which were magical formulas that helped the concerned weapon to present its self when the Mantra relevant to it was invoked.

Details of these weapons have been narrated in Valmiki's Ramayan, 1/27/4-21, and 1/28/4-12. These weapons could be invoked by their respective Mantras. Similarly, they could also be neutralized by Mantras which are outlined in Valmiki's Ramayan, 1/28/4-12.

A brief list of these weapons is as follows—Danda-chakra, Dharma-chakra, Kaal-chakra, Vishnu-chakra, Ayendra-chakra, Vajraastra, Lord Shiva's Shul, Brahma-shir, Ayeshik, Brahmaastra, the two maces named Modaki and Shikhari, Kaal-paash, Dharma-paash, Varun-paash, the two Ashanis named Shushka and Aadra, Shiva-astra, Narayan-astra, Shikhar the weapon of the Fire God, Vaayabya, Hayashir, Kroncha, the two Shaktis, Kankaal, Mushal, Kapaal, Kinkini, Nandan, the weapon of the Gandharvas known as Moha-naastra, Praswaapan, Prashman, Varshan, Shoshan, Santaapan and Vilaapan weapons of Kamdeo, Durgharsha Maadan Maanav, Mohan, Taamas, Sauman, Samvarta, Mausala, Satya, Mayamaye, the Tej (energy) of the Sun God, Prabhu-astra, the weapon of the Moon God named Shishir, the ferocious Twaa-shtra, and Shiteshu.

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/56, stanza no. 6 also.

³Sage Vishwamitra realised that Lord Vishnu had agreed to take so much trouble to come down to earth and walk all the distance to his hermitage just because he wishes to oblige his devotees. This was all the more evident to the sage when Lord Ram and Laxman had acted like innocent young boys, playing around and making fun as they wend their way from Ayodhya to the hermitage of the sage. The Lord did all this to satisfy the sage's desire to taste the happiness that a father gets playing with his sons. Hence, he offered great respect to the Lord because the Lord is a well-wisher of his devotees.

Refer note appended to Chaupai line no. 7 above.]

चौ०. प्रात कहा मुनि सन रघुराई । निर्भय जग्य करहु तुझ जाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

prāta kahā muni sana raghurāī. nirbhaya jagya karahu tumha jāī. 1.

At dawn, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram, told the sage—‘oh sage, go and do your fire sacrifice without any fear.’ (1)

[Note—The sages of the hermitage were so terrified of the demons that they had suspended the fire sacrifices ever since their chief Vishwamitra had gone to fetch Lord Ram. So, the Lord told them to resume their religious observances and perform the fire sacrifice. Lord Ram's confidence is self-evident.

One outstanding point to note here is that the Lord has virtually commanded the sages to go ahead with the fire sacrifice. He did not seek Vishwamitra's orders or permission for this. Wonderful indeed! The Lord indicated that now he is in charge; that the rest of the sages are now in his safe-keeping; that he is the one who will decide what to do and what not to do like a true Lord and Master!

Well, the Supreme Lord was in his true form and mettle at that moment. He did not need anyone's permission to fulfill the divine mandate for which he has taken birth as a human being. Rather, he is the one who would regulate how things would take shape now. The wise sages did not take this as an affront at all; rather they welcomed this confidence of Lord Ram and were reassured that they indeed were safe in his hands. This self-confident and robust attitude of the Lord instilled faith and confidence in the heart of even those sages who may have been skeptical in the beginning when they had first seen the two young princes who sage Vishwamitra brought from such great distance.]

होम करन लागे मुनि झारी । आपु रहे मख कीं रखवारी ॥ २ ॥

hōma karana lāgē muni jhārī. āpu rahē makha kīm rakhavārī. 2.

All the sages collected together and immediately started making offerings to the sacred fire (i.e. they did 'Homa'). Meanwhile, Lord Ram himself (of course, with Laxman by his side) stood at attention to guard the fire sacrifice. (2)

[Note—The fire sacrifice is an elaborate affair, but making offerings to the fire is the main part of the sacrifice as this offering is received directly by the Fire God and other Gods who find sustenance from it.

Other preliminaries such as doing Japa (repetition of Mantras) and different incantations did not cause much problem for the sages because they could do it silently without alerting the demons. But whenever they offered anything to the fire, fumes arose in the sky, and this obviously signaled to the demons that the fire sacrifice was in progress. They immediately attacked. So this time, the sages came out in the open and offered the Homa to the sacred fire.

The word in the text is "Jhaari" which means to pour liquid from a pitcher with an elongated neck and a spout at its end. This indicates that they were in a great hurry as they were quickly making the offerings, almost pouring them as fast as they could into the fire pit, to be able to complete it before the demons arrived.

The sages were performing the fire sacrifice at the designated place, while the two brothers stood guard outside, ready for battle with their bows and arrows in hand.]

सुनि मारीच निसाचर क्रोही । लै सहाय धावा मुनिद्रोही ॥ ३ ॥

sunī mārīca nisācara krōhī. lai sahāya dhāvā munidrōhī. 3.

As soon as the demon chief named Marich (*mārīca*)—who was an enemy of the sages and harboured animosity towards them—heard this news, he collected his companions and attacked. (3)

[Note—Marich is said to have 'heard' and not 'seen' the sages doing the fire sacrifice. What does this mean? He was the chief commander of the demons who was appointed by their king Ravana of Lanka to prevent the sages of the area under his command from

doing any religious activity. Being the chief commander, it is natural that he must have appointed demon guards and watches in different areas under his command to keep an eye on the developments and report to him at his command head-quarters should they observe any religious activity. So, as soon as the sages started offering Homa to the fire and fumes rose up into the sky, the demons who were appointed to watch these sages saw these fumes and immediately reported the matter to their chief, Marich. This is why Marich is said to have 'heard' and not personally 'seen' the sages doing the fire sacrifice. So he collected his demon army and summoned his brother named Subahu (pronounced as Su-baa-hoo) to launch an attack.]

बिनु फर बान राम तेहि मारा । सत जोजन गा सागर पारा ॥ ४ ॥

पावक सर सुबाहु पुनि मारा । अनुज निसाचर कटकु सँघारा ॥ ५ ॥

binu phara bāna rāma tēhi mārā. sata jōjana gā sāgara pārā. 4.
pāvaka sara subāhu puni mārā. anuja nisācara kaṭaku saṁghārā. 5.

Lord Ram shot at Marich with an arrow's shaft (i.e. an arrow that did not have its pointed tip). The thrust of the shaft flung him (Marich) a hundred Yujans away across into the ocean. [1 Yojan = roughly 8 miles on an average. There are different scales of measurements according to which 1 Yojan means 4, 8 or 16 miles.] (4)

Then the Lord hit and killed Subahu with a fire-tipped arrow which burnt him to ashes. Meanwhile, all the rest of the attacking demon army was killed and immediately eliminated by the Lord's younger brother (Laxman). (5)

[Note—Lord Ram could have killed Marich with an arrow with a pointed tip. But the Lord needed him later on to accomplish the task of killing the chief of the demon race, their king Ravana. So he spared his life and merely flung him into the ocean.

When we read the story of the Ramayan we see that Ravana had approached Marich to force him to assume the form of a golden deer so that he can steal Sita from the forest. This would lead Lord Ram to Lanka in search of her, and will culminate in the epic war that would help the Lord to kill Ravana and the rest of the evil demon race.

Had Lord Ram killed Marich at this moment, the greater plan of the Lord would have suffered. If Marich survived, he is sure to inform his lord Ravana about the developments. If the entire demon army was killed there would be no one left to inform Ravana and hint him that his nemesis has arrived. Marich was the chief demon appointed by Ravana, so he had direct access to him. Therefore it was prudent for Lord Ram to spare him so that a direct message of challenge could be conveyed to Ravana, the demon king, that the days of his tyranny are over and that the sages would soon be able to perform religious duties without fear.

Meanwhile it is significant that he killed Subahu by 'burning him'. In Hinduism, when a person dies his body is cremated in the fire, and it is reduced to ashes. This is believed to free the soul permanently from the snare of having to enter the gross body once again. Cremation is performing the last rite of the dead with great respect. Usually, the son performs the cremation of his father.

Thus, by 'burning' the gross body of Subahu instead of simply killing him, the merciful Lord Ram had symbolically done his last rites by 'cremating' him himself. How wonderful! How fortunate was Subahu that his soul was liberated after being freed from the snare of the gross body of a demon when Lord Ram killed him with his arrow, and

the gross body itself was 'cremated' by getting burnt at the hands of none else but the Supreme Lord himself.

Remember: Laxman is Lord Vishnu's Shakti in a personified form. So, while the main job was done by the Lord himself, his Shakti finished the rest of the job for him. Hence it is said that the rest of the demons were killed by Laxman.

There is another reason why Laxman killed the demon army. Lord Ram wished to give the message that no one should under-estimate Laxman and his powers in their enthusiasm for honouring and praising Lord Ram. Laxman deserves equal praise and equal honour as the Lord himself.]

मारि असुर द्विज निर्भयकारी । अस्तुति करहिं देव मुनि झारी ॥ ६ ॥

māri asura dvija nirbhayakārī. astuti karahim dēva muni jhārī. 6.

After the demons were killed, all the Gods and the sages who were involved in doing fire sacrifices (that were being constantly defiled by the demons) got together to offer their prayers to the Lord who is committed to make the Brahmins free from fear. (6)

[Note—The Gods came first to offer their obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram, and they were followed by the sages who did the fire sacrifices. This is because the Gods were exceptionally happy as it was after a very long time that they could find nourishment by way of successful offerings that were made to the sacred fire by the sages. The offerings that are made to the sacred fire of the sacrifice give sustenance to the Gods. The Gods were eternal enemies of the demons. This was one main reason why the demons defiled the fire sacrifices so that the Gods would be starved of food and become weak and unable to oppose them.

The sages became enemies of the demons because they performed fire sacrifices in which they offered food to the Gods, something which the demons wanted to stop. These facts are clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 181 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

Lord Vishnu had earlier promised the Gods, the sages, and Mother Earth that he would take birth as Lord Ram to give protection to them as well as the Brahmins who were being endlessly tormented by the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

Hence, both the Gods and the sages performing fire sacrifices assembled to say their thanks to Lord Ram and Laxman after the demons were eliminated.]

तहँ पुनि कछुक दिवस रघुराया । रहे कीन्हि बिप्रन्ह पर दाया ॥ ७ ॥

taham̐ puni kachuka divasa raghurāyā. rahē kīnhi bipranha para dāyā. 7.

The Lord of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram) stayed there for some more days to show grace upon the Brahmins and make them feel fortunate. (7)

[Note—The Lord stayed for some more days to ensure that no new attack from the demons are made. He wished to secure the area. The sages harboured doubt that though Marich and Subahu were killed, there was all probability that their king Ravana would order stronger demon force to attack and kill them the next time. So, they must have requested the Lord to stay for some more days to protect them and guard the fire sacrifices.

Now, the question arises: why did the demon king Ravana not order an attack on the hermitage again? Well, there are many possibilities. One is that all the commanders whom Ravana may have asked to go and take revenge must have pleaded that they be excused because all of them were terrified about their own safety after having learnt the fate of Marich, Subahu and their army. When Ravana apprehended a virtual mutiny or revolt in the ranks of the demon forces if he insisted and threatened them much, he decided to keep quiet and wait for an opportunity to take revenge himself later on. Another reason may have been that no one might have gathered enough courage to go and inform him directly about the elimination of the demon army at sage Vishwamitra's hermitage for fear of his own life because the angry Ravana might have killed the informer in a fit of rage. So everyone avoided him. That is why no one came to attack the sages again.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lord Ram and Laxman stayed at the hermitage for three more days. On the fourth day, sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to accompany him to witness the bow breaking ceremony at Janakpur. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 11-12.

By staying for some more days instead of immediately returning to Ayodhya after having successfully finished the work for which he was brought to the hermitage by sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram seemed to oblige the sages present there who were very eager to have the Lord in their midst for some more days in order to enjoy his divine and auspicious company. It would have been highly selfish and un-courteous for the sages to have allowed Lord Ram and Laxman to go back from their hermitage immediately after their objective of having the demons killed was accomplished. No good host would do that; it's against the principles of hospitality.

Besides this, the sages had by now realised that Lord Ram was no ordinary prince but some Divine Being, though they might not have been aware of the Lord's true identity as much as Vishwamitra was. So therefore, they must have requested him to give them the privilege of his company for some more days because no one knows that such a chance would ever come again in their lives or not.]

भगति हेतु बहु कथा पुराना । कहे बिप्र जद्यपि प्रभु जाना ॥ ८ ॥

bhagati hētu bahu kathā purānā. kahē bipra jadyapi prabhu jānā. 8.

During the time the Lord stayed there at the hermitage, the sages (Brahmins; 'Bipra') entertained him by narrating many devotional stories* from the Purans (ancient history of the Hindus) though the all-knowing Lord knew them.

[This line can be interpreted in another way as follows—'Out of their devotion and love for the Lord, the sages (Brahmins; 'Bipra') narrated many glorious stories from the Purans to him to entertain him though the Lord knew all of them.'](8)

[Note—Some way had to be found to pass time away in a positive manner, and so instead of idling it away and gossiping unnecessarily, the sages decided to narrate many interesting stories from ancient history that laid stress on devotion, love and submission for the Lord God as it helped in their spiritual pursuit as well as passing time constructively. The sages would always talk about things that had some spiritual quotient in it; they would not waste time in worthless chatter or gossip.

Lord Ram had obliged the sages by coming all the way from Ayodhya to their hermitage to protect their fire sacrifice. So, now these sages felt that they must do something for him to show their gratitude and thanks to the Lord. For sages and seers the

only way to do this is to give a discourse on the scriptures. They selected devotional stories instead of hard-core philosophy because they thought that stories are much more entertaining than philosophy. They had started treating Lord Ram and Laxman as their sons, like the case of sage Vishwamitra.

It is said in Adhyatma Ramayan that during this period sage Vishwamitra had affectionately fed Lord Ram sweet fruits and entertained him with stories from the Purans. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 11.

Though the Lord knew these stories he still listened to them patiently and politely to oblige the sages and keep them happy. A similar thing has happened when sage Vasistha narrated stories from the Purans and the Vedas. The Lord listened silently and attentively though he knew all of them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26.

The actual intent of the sages in telling these stories to the Lord was to express their own devotion and submission for him through the medium of these stories. This is the reason why the Lord heard them politely to indicate to these aged sages that he has got the hint.

*Remember: Lord Ram has himself declared that out of the many forms that Bhakti (devotion) takes, the first is to have company or communion with pious people and saints, and the second it to have deep interest in hearing and telling devotional stories related to me. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35.

Both these conditions are met here—there is a community of sages who pious people, and there is narration and listening of devotional stories. This is why the word “Bhakti” is used first in this verse.]

तब मुनि सादर कहा बुझाई । चरित एक प्रभु देखिअ जाई ॥ ९ ॥

धनुषजग्य सुनि रघुकुल नाथा । हरषि चले मुनिबर के साथ ॥ १० ॥

taba muni sādara kahā bujhā'ī. carita ēka prabhu dēkhi'a jā'ī. 9.
dhanuṣajagya suni raghukula nāthā. haraṣi calē munibara kē sāthā. 10.

Then the sage (Vishwamitra) respectfully explained to the Lord (Sri Ram) that a wonderful and rare event is taking place (at Janakpur), and so let us go and see it. (9)

When the Lord of the Raghu's clan (i.e. Lord Ram) heard of the 'Dhanush Yagya' (the bow-breaking ceremony), he gladly accepted the offer to accompany the sage there. (10)

[Note—The Lord had stayed in the hermitage for three days, and when he was sure that there was no more threat from the demons, he sought permission from sage Vishwamitra to go back home. It was 'then' that the sage told him about the rare competitive event taking place at Janakpur where Lord Shiva's bow is to be lifted, strung and broken to determine who is the greatest warrior of that time in the world. It was to be like a modern-day Olympics. All the great kings and princes of the earth would assemble, and each of them would try his strength on the bow.

Surely there must be some great trophy reserved for the winner. In all probability the sage did not disclose that this 'trophy' would be the marriage of the winner with king Janak's daughter Sita. Why? Because if Lord Ram would have agreed to accompany the sage upon learning this, it would have meant that the Lord secretly wished to participate in the bow breaking ceremony and took chance at marrying Sita. Or that the Lord accepted to go to Janakpur to attend the ceremony because he secretly wished to see Sita

and explore the chances of his marrying her by taking part in the bow-breaking ceremony. The wise sage did not wish the skeptical and suspicious world to get a wrong signal, to unnecessarily interpret things wrongly and doubt the immaculate and impeccable noble character of Lord Ram and Laxman.

The question arises, how did sage Vishwamitra come to know of the bow-breaking competition at Janakpur? Well, the answer is that when king Janak decided to host the bow-breaking ceremony, he had sent invitation to all the famous people of that time. The hermitage of sage Vishwamitra was not very far from Janakpur, and he was the most famous Kshatriya-turned-Brahmin sage of his time. So it is natural that the king's messengers must have arrived to invite the sage to the bow ceremony. The sage would never have gone there uninvited.

Further, the sage had the mystical power to see future events and developments. He knew that Lord Ram and his other brothers were destined to marry at Janakpur. So instead of making a polite excuse to the invitation of Janak, he accepted it and persuaded Lord Ram to come with him.

Ayodhya was far away, and the sage did not think it proper to allow the two young boys to go back unescorted. Suppose we do not take into consideration the fact that Vishwamitra had foresight to see the future course of developments at Janakpur where Lord Ram would break the bow and marry Sita as well as establish himself as an all-time great warrior, then it is logical to assume that he might have guessed that king Janak must have surely invited king Dasrath to the ceremony since he has invited all the great king for the ceremony. In that case, the sage planned, he will hand over Ram and Laxman to their father Dasrath there. Well, this is a possibility.

Then he might have motivated Lord Ram to accompany him to Janakpur by telling him that he will be seeing many new fascinating places, and that he would have the chance to witness a wonderful spectacle like the one he had never seen before—the breaking of a formidably strong bow. Like any other young prince of his age, the Lord readily agreed. He also agreed because he felt naturally excited about having a chance to witness a stiff competition, news that would automatically enthuse a brave warrior. The breaking of a huge bow was not an ordinary event, so the Lord enthusiastically agreed to accompany the sage to the venue.

All these things must have come into play simultaneously in a greater or lesser degree when sage Vishwamitra 'explained' to Lord Ram to come with him to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

How do we know that it was a bow 'breaking' ceremony? Well, in ancient times when a great event took place that was attended by rituals and ceremony, and attended by a large number of invited guests, it was called a 'Yagya'. A special name was assigned to a particular type of Yagya—e.g. the 'Ashwamedha Yagya' meant the horse sacrifice where a horse was sacrificed at the end of the ceremonies. So, when this ceremony is called a 'Dhansuha Yagya' it clearly implies a ceremony where a bow is to be sacrificed. ['Dhanusha = a bow; 'Yagya = sacrifice.] And a bow can only be sacrificed by 'breaking it into two' because it would be tantamount to killing it.

Another reason for calling this particular ceremony a 'sacrifice' is that Janak's daughter Sita was to be married to the successful contender. Giving away one's daughter in marriage to the groom is regarded in Hinduism as a 'Daan' or a self-less gift. It is called 'Kanya Daan'. ['Kanaya' = a virgin girl; 'Daan' = selfless gift or donation.] In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, sage Vishwamitra has told Lord Ram in clear terms that Lord Shiva's big and wonderful bow is kept with king Janak, and the king would welcome the Lord warmly and show great respect to him. So he must come along with him. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15; Canto 6, verse no. 1.

The sage then told Lord Ram that after watching this fascinating event at Janakpur, he can return to Ayodhya straight from there. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 2.

In this Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas it is clear that only sage Vishwamitra had gone to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman; there is no mention of any other sage accompanying them. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 212. This is also evident here in the present Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 210 which we are currently reading.

Later on also when they arrive at Janakpur, all narration of the subsequent events there refer only to sage Vishwamitra. Refer for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 214; Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 239.

But in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas as well as Valmiki's Ramayan it is said that a group of sages had accompanied Vishwamitra when he went to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 14; and (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 31, verse no. 14.]

आश्रम एक दीख मग माहीं । खग मृग जीव जंतु तहँ नाहीं ॥ ११ ॥

पूछा मुनिहि सिला प्रभु देखी । सकल कथा मुनि कहा बिसेषी ॥ १२ ॥

āśrama ēka dīkha maga māhīm. khaga mṛga jīva jantu taham' nāhīm. 11.
pūchā munihi silā prabhu dēkhī. sakala kathā muni kahā bisēṣī. 12.

On the way, they saw a lonely and unkempt hermitage that appeared to have been abandoned long ago. It had no animals, no birds, no insects, or any other sign of life in it.¹ (11)

The Lord (Sri Ram) saw a boulder or a slab of stone there, and out of curiosity, he asked the sage (Vishwamitra) about it. The sage narrated to him the entire story related to this stone boulder or slab.² (12)

[Note—¹The surrounding area was full of vibrant forest life—greenery, plants, birds, animals, insects etc. In this pleasant surrounding was this particular forlorn, decrepit and untended place which looked like it was a hermitage long ago.

As to the location of this hermitage, Adhyatma Ramayan says it was located on the banks of river Ganges. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 14.

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, it was located within the realm of the king of Janakpur. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 48, verse no. 11.

²The presence of a slab or a boulder in the center aroused the curiosity of Lord Ram because it had a certain aura of divinity or holiness about it that attracted his attention. Perhaps it was shaped like some figurine representing some person who had been turned into a stone. Amidst the ruins, this figurine was unexpected. So the Lord was naturally curious to know about its origin.

When he asked sage Vishwamitra, the learned and compassionate sage told him the whole pathetic story of how Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, had been turned into a stone by a curse. This story is narrated in (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-34; and (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33.

When Lord Ram heard the story, he was full of sympathy for Ahilya because she was not at fault, and whatever sin or error she committed was out of ignorance of the truth and

unawareness of the reality. But she had already suffered for her follies more than enough and has done enough of penance to repent for her sins. So therefore she deserves pardon and reprieve. Lord Ram is an epitome of mercy and compassion; he just could not turn his head away and walk on, leaving the poor Ahilya suffer any longer.

So naturally he sought to know from the sage how can she be redeemed. The wise sage then told him that when sage Gautam realised that Ahilya was not at fault after learning the truth of how the events unfolded, he had told her that though once the curse is made it cannot be taken back, but however he blesses her that she will find liberation from her cursed stone-like form when she would be touched by the holy dust of the feet of Lord Ram. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 31-32.

So the Lord decided to put his holy and divine feet on the stone so that Ahilya is freed from her curse. This is narrated below in Doha no. 210 and the following Chanda. It ought to be noted that it was out of his merciful nature that Lord Ram decided to put his foot on the stone—refer Doha no. 211 below.

The Lord must have contemplated whether it would be proper and right to touch Ahilya with his foot. Normally this would be improper because she was the wife of a great sage, Gautam. But then the Lord realised that if he acted in a too formal way and tried to make excuses by saying that he cannot put his foot on a sage's wife, it would be against his vows of providing liberation and deliverance to those who suffer and are waiting for his mercy.

There were so many stones on the path on which the Lord walked; did he not touch them? So how does it matter if he touched one other stone if this act helped to provide immense relief to a suffering soul?

Then there were other factors in favour of his decision of touching that boulder of stone with his foot. For one, this is what sage Gautam had himself wanted—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 31-32; Valmiki's Ramayan, Canto 48, verse nos. 30-32. For another, sage Vishwamitra too wants him to touch the stone to liberate Ahilya—refer: (i) Doha no. 210 below. (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 35-36; (iii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Canto 49, verse nos. 11-18.

The story of Ahilya in brief is as follows— She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world known about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes

on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.

The story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.]

दो०. गौतम नारि श्राप बस उपल देह धरि धीर ।
चरन कमल रज चाहति कृपा करहु रघुबीर ॥ २१० ॥

dōhā.

gautama nāri śrāpa basa upala dēha dhari dhīra.
carana kamala raja cāhati kṛpā karahu raghubīra. 210.

The sage advised Lord Ram—‘Oh Raghubir (the brave warrior of king Raghu's dynasty)! The wife of sage Gautam has lived here patiently in the form of a stone due to a curse cast upon her, expecting that one day she will be freed from this curse when the dust of your holy feet will touch her. So she deserves the holy dust of your feet, and so please be merciful upon her and remove the curse from which she has been suffering for so long. (Doha no. 210)

[Note—Refer to the detailed note appended to Chaupai line nos. 11-12 above.

Liberation of Ahilya has been beautifully narrated in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/57—to 1/59.

छं०. परसत पद पावन सोक नसावन प्रगट भई तपपुंज सही । १ ॥
देखत रघुनायक जन सुखदायक सनमुख होइ कर जोरि रही ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

parasata pada pāvana sōka nasāvana pragaṭa bha'ī tapapunja sahī. 1.
dēkhata raghunāyaka jana sukhadāyaka sanamukha hō'i kara jōri rahī. 2.

As soon as Lord Ram's holy and divine feet, which are all-purifying and destroyer of all sorrows and miseries, touched the stone, she (Ahilya) revealed herself in her true glorious form that was like a glowing image of Tapa (austerity and penance). (1)

When she observed that Raghunayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) was standing in front, she immediately stood up and folded her hands reverentially. (2)

[Note—The feet of Lord Ram removed the stubborn affects of the curse. They sort of washed off the curse that had covered Ahilya and made her lifeless as a stone. They purified her soul and freed it from the miserable condition in which it had got trapped since thousand of years.

The vow of chastity of Ahilya had been violated by Indra without her knowledge. This had made her 'impure'. So when she was touched by Lord Ram's feet which have the power to purify the most impure, she was now 'purified'.

She had been miserable and suffered horribly as a stone. So when Lord Ram touched her with his feet, this misery and suffering also vanished.

As soon as the curse was removed, Ahilya could see and feel. It was like she had been in an unconscious state for so long, and had suddenly regained consciousness. Life sprung back into her gross body. Then she slowly opened her eyes and saw a marvelous sight—her redeemer Lord Ram was standing right in front, smiling cheerfully down at her. Overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, she stood up and brought her two hands together, with palms touching each other, as a gesture of extreme reverence and submission for the Lord.

Sage Valmiki has described in his Ramayan that inspite of turning into a stone, Ahilya was deemed to be doing a form of Tapa which was so severe that her form glowed like a fire. Perhaps this is the reason which attracted Lord Ram's attention to her. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 49, verse nos. 13-16. She looked like the flame of a fire that is covered with smoke; or like the moon that is obscured by the cloud or fog; or like the sun that is seen in murky water.

Therefore, as soon as this curse-like smoke was removed, the flame leapt back to life; as soon as the cloud was removed the moon appeared with all its beauty; and as soon as the sun was seen in clear water, its reflection turned splendorous as the sun in the sky.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60, Tulsidas has wonderfully described the restoration of Ahilya into her original divine form of unmatched beauty and radiance by the touch of Lord Ram's holy feet.]

अति प्रेम अधीरा पुलक सरीरा मुख नहिं आवइ बचन कही । ३ ॥

अतिसय बड़भागी चरनन्हि लागी जुगल नयन जलधार बही ॥ ४ ॥

ati prēma adhīrā pulaka sarīrā mukha nahim āva'i bacana kahī. 3.

atisaya barābhāgī carananhi lāgī jugala nayana jaladhāra bahī. 4.

She was so overwhelmed with love, devotion and gratitude for the Lord that her entire body was thrilled beyond measure, covering it with goose-flesh. She was so dumbfounded and stunned that she could not utter a word. (3)

She regarded herself as being extremely fortunate and lucky. She fell at the holy feet of Lord Ram with tears streaming down from both her eyes. (4)

[Note—It was the most happy moment in the life of Ahilya. The Supreme Lord was standing right before her eyes, her curse of ages was wiped clean, her torments and miseries vanished, and she was restored to her original radiant divine form as a great sage's wife. What more could she want or expect.

She was overjoyed and ecstatic. She fell at the Lord's feet to thank him. Tears gushed out of her eyes in sheer joy and happiness. It was a spontaneous emotional reaction which she could not hide.

She wanted to thank the Lord, but her throat was choked and she could not speak anything. She was shaking with emotion and her knees buckled, so she fell at the Lord's feet to express her surrender and seek the Lord's blessing as well as forgiveness for all her past mistakes. She also fell at his feet to indicate that she is not able to use words to pray to him or thank him, and is hugely obliged to him.

Falling at someone's feet is a sign of greatest respect and absolute surrender.]

धीरजु मन कीन्हा प्रभु कहूँ चीन्हा रघुपति कृपाँ भगति पाई । ५ ॥

अति निर्मल बानीं अस्तुति ठानी ग्यानगज्ज जय रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

dhīraju mana kīnhā prabhu kahum̐ cīnhā raghupati kṛpām̐ bhagati pāī. 5.
ati nirmala bānīm̐ astuti ṭhānī gyānagajja jaya raghurāī. 6.

Ahilya recovered her poise, became calm, and gathered courage in her heart. She recognized the Lord, and by his grace Bhakti (devotion) sprouted in her.¹ (5)

She decided to offer prayers to the Lord in a very sweet voice that lacked any kind of pretensions and deceit. She said—‘Oh Lord of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram). Glory to you! You are accessible only through spiritual knowledge². (6)

[Note—¹In the initial phases she was absolutely shocked and dumbfounded. What had happened was beyond her imagination. This is because after having lived as a stone for thousands of years and remaining submerged in deep meditation during this long time, all her senses had become numb. She was completely unaware of her surroundings. Then suddenly she gained consciousness as if person who had been in coma for a long time suddenly regains his awareness of the world and retrieves his senses and begins to see, feel, hear and move. She was too stunned to react. This is clear from reading line nos. 3-4.

But after some time when the first moments of shock and disbelief passed over, she was able to regain her senses and poise. She thought to herself that she must at least offer her thanks to her redeemer and saviour, the Lord whom, she recollected, her husband Gautam had told her about. Gautam had told her that Lord would one day come and touch her stone-like form with the dust of his holy feet, and that then she would be freed from her curse. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 30-32; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 48, verse nos. 30-32.

So since this has actually happened, Ahilya deduced that the person standing before her must surely be Lord Ram. This is how she ‘recognized’ the Lord.

And when a devotee recognizes his beloved Lord, what happens? A huge wave of devotion, love and submission sweeps the person off his or her feet. So, as soon as Ahilya realised that Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord, is standing before her, she was blessed by devotion and love for the Lord in her heart.

²It is significant to say that the Lord is known by spiritual knowledge. Ahilya is referring to the teaching of the Upanishads that stress that in order to have knowledge of Brahm one must have knowledge of the Absolute Truth and Reality through self-knowledge and realisation of the Atma, the soul, which is pure Consciousness residing in one's own heart, in one's own inner-self. This knowledge is the true knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the only Absolute Truth and Reality in creation.

Hence, the idea is that the real ‘Ram’, the real Supreme Being who is the redeemer and saviour of the devotee's soul, the entity that is worthy of adoration and worship is the pure conscious supreme Soul that resides in the physical gross body that was visible to the world in the form of a prince of Ayodhya known as Lord Ram.

The ‘physical Ram’ known as the prince of Ayodhya, the son of king Dasrath and a great warrior of the Raghu dynasty, acted like any other human being, so one must not be misled by his worldly deeds and actions to get confused and harbour doubts about the Lord's divinity and holiness. The ‘actual Ram’ lived hidden behind the external façade of the gross body in the form of an invisible, subtle and sublime entity known as the

Supreme Atma, the Supreme Being, who is the redeemer and saviour of the world. This 'real Ram' is nothing but pure Consciousness.]

मैं नारि अपावन प्रभु जग पावन रावन रिपु जन सुखदाई । ७ ॥

राजीव बिलोचन भव भय मोचन पाहि पाहि सरनहिं आई ॥ ८ ॥

mairi nāri apāvana prabhu jaga pāvana rāvana ripu jana sukhadāī. 7.
rājīva bilōcana bhava bhaya mōcana pāhi pāhi saranahim āī. 8.

Ahilya prayed—'I am an impure woman, and oh Lord you are the purifier of the whole world.¹ You are an enemy of Ravana² (the demon king) but a friend of all other creatures who are your devotees. (7)

Oh Lord with a lotus-like eyes, and a remover of the formidable fear arising from this horrifying world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death with their attendant horrors³. I have come to seek refuge at your holy feet. Please save me; please protect me. (8)

[Note—¹As soon as Ahilya recollected her poise, she remembered the events of her past life. This is, as we have seen above in the note appended to line no. 5, the reason why she could recognize Lord Ram. Therefore, she also recollected why she was cursed in the first place; her chastity had been violated. This is the reason why she accepts that she is an impure woman. But immediately she says two things—one, that Lord Ram is the purifier of the world, and two, that she is seeking humble refuge in his feet.

In other words, she pleaded with Lord Ram that though it is undeniable that she is impure, but that is the thing of the past. Now since she has come seeking surrender and refuge, the Lord being the purifier of the world is morally bound to wash her clean of her past sins and accept her as his devotee and grant her his fellowship.

Remember: This is Lord Ram's own declaration and vow that no matter how sinful a person is, if he comes to surrender before the Lord with a true heart then the Lord will willingly accept him and forgive all his misdemeanours. The Lord had made this clear in the context of Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, when the former came to seek refuge with the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 43—44.

²In all probability the fact that Lord Ram would kill Ravana when he goes to the forest to fulfill all the works of the Gods, and once this is accomplished, all the creatures would be able to live in peace wherever they lived was known to her. This is because all the great sages of the time knew of these developments—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 285 where it is said that all these future developments had been predicted by sage Yagyawalkya and learned sage's words cannot go in vain. So Ahilya's husband, sage Gautam, must surely have known it, and he must have told her this sometimes during their interaction.

³Lord Ram is the supreme Brahm himself personified. As such, he is indeed the supreme liberator of all the creatures from the endless cycle of birth and death.]

मुनि श्राप जो दीन्हा अति भल कीन्हा परम अनुग्रह मैं माना । ९ ॥

देखेउँ भरि लोचन हरि भवमोचन इहड़ लाभ संकर जाना ॥ १० ॥

muni śrāpa jō dīnhā ati bhala kīnhā parama anugraha mairi mānā. 9.
dēkhē'um̐ bhari lōcana hari bhavamōcana iha'i lābha saṅkara jānā. 10.

The sage (Gautam) had done a great favour upon me by cursing me, because it is due to that curse that I am able to have your divine communion and vision today. (9)

[Otherwise, where was it ever possible?] It is due to that curse that today I feel myself so fortunate that I can see Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu)¹ till my eyes are completely filled with this divine sight. Even Lord Shiva (who is considered as the most enlightened God) has regarded this (vision of Lord Vishnu in the personified form as Lord Ram) the greatest good fortune and the most precious gift for the eye². (10)

[Note—¹This shows that Ahilya had realised that Lord Ram is no one else but Lord Vishnu himself personified. Lord Vishnu is the cosmic invisible form of the Supreme Being, and in that form Vishnu is also known as the 'Viraat Purush', the colossal, the all-encompassing, the all-pervading cosmic invisible form of the Supreme Being, the form that whose head is the heaven, the body is the sky, and the foot is the earth, the form in which each hair represents a world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192; and (ii) Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 2 which precedes Doha no. 202.

Mother Kaushalya had the divine vision of Lord Vishnu in all his splendorous form at the time of the Lord's revelation as Lord Ram—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto no. 3, verse nos. 16-18.

²Lord Shiva enshrines Lord Ram in his heart. Shiva eternally meditates upon the divine form and holy name "RAM" of the Lord. In fact, out of the thousands of holy names, Lord Shiva had selected this name as the only spiritual formula that cures all spiritual problems for the creature—including giving him liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death. This is the reason why Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram into the ears of a dying creature on the banks of river Ganges at Kashi so that the dying can find liberation and deliverance. Shiva's devotion and love for Lord Ram surpasses all, and therefore the Lord has himself said that if someone wants to have devotion for him and wishes to attain him, then he must first offer his obeisance to Lord Shiva and please him. Even the story of the Ramayan was first conceived or revealed in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246; Lanka Kand—(vi) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3.

There is a wonderful Upanishad named 'Ram Utttar Tapini Upanishad' in which the same thing about Lord Shiva's devotion and faith in Lord Ram is reiterated. Its part of the Atharva Veda. Refer also to Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 5 where it is said that Lord Shiva provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man on the banks of river Ganges by uttering Lord Ram's holy name in his ears.]

बिनती प्रभु मोरी मैं मति भोरी नाथ न मागउँ बर आना । ११ ॥

पद कमल परागा रस अनुरागा मम मन मधुप करै पाना ॥ १२ ॥

binatī prabhu mōrī mairī mati bhōrī nātha na māga'um̐ bara ānā. 11.
pada kamala parāgā rasa anurāgā mama mana madhupa karai pānā. 12.

Oh Lord! I am not erudite or wise (like the great sages and seers), and so I don't know what to ask you, except for making one request.¹ (11)

And it is that 'let my Mana (mind and heart) become a bee that continuously enjoys the divine bliss that comes by sucking at the nectar that effuses from your lotus-like holy feet.'² (12)

[Note—¹Ahilya told the Lord that she is not much educated and does not know how to offer elaborate worship or prayers to him. She is of a low wisdom and intellect—for had it not been so then why would she have allowed herself to be so easily cheated by Indra in her earlier life which led to her being cursed to become a stone?

This logic made Lord Ram speechless!

²Then she continued—'Oh Lord. In this situation, don't expect much from me. I can't recite the hymns of the scriptures to pray to you. But in simple language, what I want is this: let me be your absolute devotee so much so that let my mind and heart remains submerged in your thoughts, and let me lose awareness of everything else in the bliss that I get by fixing my mind and heart in remembering your holy and divine feet which are like lotus. Just like the bee forgets everything else when it sights the open lotus flower and hovers over it and remains oblivious of the world while it sucks the flower's nectar, let my existence be like this bee—lost in the thoughts of your holy feet and remain blissful in it.

I don't want anything other than this.'

It is to be noted here that normally when someone offered worship to the Lord, he requests what he wants only when the Lord asks him to do so. This is the norm. For instance, when Manu and Satrupa had done Tapa for having a divine vision of Lord Hari, it was only after Lord Vishnu requesting them to ask for something that they expressed their desire to have the Lord as their son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 149.

But in the case of Ahilya, she has asked Lord Ram what she wants even before the Lord asked her to do so. That is why she says that she is not wise and intelligent, and therefore the Lord must forgive her for being unable to observe formalities!

She comes straight to the point, without wasting any time, lest some more mischief is created by someone. She is very apprehensive after her bad past experience where her innocence was exploited by Indra.]

जेहिं पद सुरसरिता परम पुनीता प्रगट भई सिव सीस धरी । १३ ॥

सोई पद पंकज जेहि पूजत अज मम सिर धरेउ कृपाल हरी ॥ १४ ॥

jēhiṁ pada surasaritā parama punītā pragaṭa bha'ī siva sīsa dhārī. 13.

sō'ī pada paṅkaja jēhi pūjata aja mama sira dharē'u kṛpāla harī. 14.

The holy feet (of Lord Vishnu) from which the holiest of all the rivers known as 'the River of Gods' ('surasaritā parama punītā'; river 'Gangaa' or river Ganges) had emerged, and which was accepted by Lord Shiva with great respect when he decided to honour it by giving it a place on his head,¹ (13) I am so privileged and honoured today to have the same divine feet that is also worshipped by Brahma (the creator of the world) being placed on my own head.

Oh the most merciful Lord, you have been exceptionally kind, merciful and gracious upon me today.’ (14)

[Note—¹The story of the origin of the holy river Ganges is narrated in a note of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 212 below.

एहि भाँति सिधारी गौतम नारी बार बार हरि चरन परी । १५ ॥
जो अति मन भावा सो बरु पावा गै पतिलोक अनंद भरी ॥ १६ ॥

ēhi bhām̐ti sidhārī gautama nārī bāra bāra hari carana parī. 15.
jō ati mana bhāvā sō baru pāvā gai patilōka ananda bharī. 16.

In this way, the wife of sage Gautam fell at the feet of Lord Hari (Ram) repeatedly. (15)

After having received the blessings that she had cherished (and thereby feeling fully contented), she then cheerfully went back to the hermitage of her husband, sage Gautam. (16)

[Note—What did she want? She wanted eternal devotion for Lord Ram and love for the Lord’s holy feet; she wanted her mind and heart to remain engrossed in the memory and thoughts of the Lord’s holy feet. Refer line no. 12.

Then she fearlessly went back to her husband, sage Gautam, because he had also personally told her that after her curse is removed by the touch of Lord Ram’s holy feet she could come back to him. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 48, verse no. 32; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 32.]

दे०. अस प्रभु दीनबंधु हरि कारन रहित दयाल ।
तुलसिदास सठ तेहि भजु छाड़ि कपट जंजाल ॥ २११ ॥

dōhā.

asa prabhu dīnabandhu hari kārana rahita dayāla.
tulasidāsa saṭha tēhi bhaju chāḍi kapaṭa janjāla. 211.

Lord (Ram) is such a merciful and compassionate one that he shows grace and kindness selflessly, without expecting any thing or any service or any sort of obligation in return. [Lord Ram shows mercy, compassion and grace to others just for the sake of it, and not that he expects the beneficiary to feel obliged to the Lord in any way whatsoever. It is of course another matter that the creature who is benefited by the benevolence and magnanimity of the munificent Lord should, and must, feel exceedingly obliged and thankful to him.]

Tulsidas addresses his himself and says—‘Oh my foolish and stubborn self (which is a reference to the ‘Mana’, the mind and the heart)¹! You must abandon all sorts of pretensions, conceit and deceit as well delusions and worldly entanglements, and instead inculcate steady and profound love and devotion for Lord Ram who is so kind, magnanimous, benevolent, gracious and merciful.’ (Doha no. 211)

[Note—¹There are several instances in Ram Charit Manas where Tulsidas addresses his own self and calls his Mana stupid and stubborn because it would take interest in the mortal and perishable world which never gives peace, instead of focusing its attention on Lord Ram and developing devotion for the Lord as it would give it eternal peace and bliss. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Sundar Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 130.

Oftentimes he has also called himself stupid because he does not develop strong devotion for Lord Ram who is eager to fulfill all his wishes—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 28 Ka.]

चौ०. चले राम लछिमन मुनि संग । गए जहाँ जग पावनि गंगा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

calē rāma lachimana muni saṅgā. ga'ē jahāṁ jaga pāvani gaṅgā. 1.

Lord Ram moved ahead from there with Laxman and the sage (Vishwamitra) accompanying him. He went to the place where there was river Ganga (Ganges) which is a purifier of the whole world. (1)

[Note—There are three important points to note in this line as follows—

(i) The first important point to note here is that it was sage Vishwamitra who was in the lead, walking in the front with the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman following him when he brought them from Ayodhya to his hermitage. But now Lord Ram is leading them. This is significant. Till now the sage thought that the Lord was a child, a young boy after all. But now, after so many developments such as the killing of Taadaka, Subahu and the army of Marich, the flinging of Marich away from the hermitage, and now the magical conversion of a lifeless stone into a living woman convinced the sage that Lord Ram is not a child but the Supreme Lord himself. So he must be allowed to lead. Besides this, the sage had already given Lord Ram all the weapons he had (refer: Doha no. 209), so the sage permitted the Lord to walk ahead of him so that if any demon attacked them on the way, the leading man, Lord Ram, would be there to take care.

(ii) The second important point is this: At the time of Lord Ram's departure from Ayodhya with the sage, it is said that he "cheerfully accompanied the sage to remove his fears" (refer: line no. 1 of Doha no. 208 Ka), but now no such enthusiasm is observed. He simply "moved ahead". So why is it so? Well, Lord Ram had some regrets in his mind that he had to touch a woman, especially a sage's Brahmin wife (Ahilya), with his foot. This is not a good thing on the face of it, though the intention was noble and the result was also noble. But then the Lord comforted himself with the argument that if he had refrained from doing so it would have not been the right thing either—because that would have meant that Ayilya would remain as a stone for the rest of the time and continue to suffer. It would have gone against the Lord's own vows that he would take birth upon the earth to provide liberation and deliverance to the suffering creatures.

Then he was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to touch Ahilya with his foot (refer: Doha no. 210), and the Lord could not disobey the sage. So it was alright. Yet the Lord was not very happy at this event. That is why he moved ahead without showing any cheer this time.

(iii) The third important point is this—The Lord felt guilty of having to touch Ahilya with his feet. So he wanted to wash them. Nearby was the holy river Ganges. So he

decided to proceed there to take a bath and clean himself of the wrong that he was forced to do. River Ganges is the purifier of the world, so it is fully competent to clean the taint that has got stuck on the otherwise holy feet of Lord Ram.]

गाधिसूनु सब कथा सुनाई । जेहि प्रकार सुरसरि महि आई ॥ २ ॥

gādhisūnu saba kathā sunāī. jēhi prakāra surasari mahi āī. 2.

Gaadhī's son (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) narrated to Lord Ram (and Laxman) as to how the river of Gods, 'Sursari', descended upon earth¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 7 also.

Obviously, Lord Ram had asked sage Vishwamitra to tell him the story of river Ganges. So the sage narrated the whole story to him.

A remarkable thing here is that instead of addressing Vishwamitra as a 'sage', he is called 'the son of Gaadhi'. Well, the plausible reason is that Gaadhi was a great king, and therefore he must have known about all the wonderful deeds done by great ancient kings. The kings were supposed to gather information about other kings for the purpose of knowledge, and also to remain updated about what other kings were doing for the purpose of security and mutual dealings as well. So his descendent, Vishwamitra, was, in all likelihood, most competent to tell the story of king Sagar and how his great grandson Bhagirath was able to bring the holy river Ganges to earth.

The story of the origin of the holy river Ganges is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Skandha 5, Canto 17, verse nos. 1-10.

It was contained in the Kamandalu (water pot) of Brahma, the creator. This is said in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Skandha 8, Canto 21, verse no. 4.

Then, its acceptance on the head of Lord Shiva where it was locked in the mat of thick hairs on the Lord's head is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 42, verse nos. 23-25, and Canto 43, verse no. 1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

Briefly, the story of the holy river Ganges is this: When Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, to crush the haughtiness of king Bali and prevent him from declaring himself the emperor of the entire universe, the Lord had expended his left foot so much that its toe nail had ruptured the outer shell of the galaxy, creating a hole. The inter-galactic river flowing outside the known galaxy gushed in through this hole to fill the whole space. When this celestial river touched the feet of Lord Vishnu, it turned reddish due to the colour of the Lord's feet which are like the red or pink lotus. Because it had its origin from the foot of Lord Vishnu, the primary name of river Ganges was 'Bhawatpadi'. ['Bhagwat' = Lord Vishnu; 'Padi' = from foot.]

After the passage of thousands of Yugas (eras), it established itself in the northern edge of the heaven where the Polar Star is situated. This area is known as 'Vishnu-pad'. It is here that the Lord's great devotee Dhruv accepts the water of this holy river as sanctified water, and the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-rishis hold it in the lock of hairs on their head. Meanwhile, when the celestial water poured in from the hole in the galaxy, the creator Brahma was alarmed because he realised that its fierce currents would sweep everything away, both in the heaven as well as on the earth where it descended to wash the feet of Lord Vaaman immediately after its entrance in the habitable galaxy. So Brahma used his Kamandalu, the water pot, to contain river Ganges within it.

From the summit of the heaven, i.e. from its northern fringes, Ganges cascaded down to the abode of the Moon God, went past it and fell on the summit of Mt. Meru (the golden mountain where the Gods live, including their king Indra) which is situated within the realm of Brahma, the creator.

From there it divides into four branches—named Sita, Alaknanda, Chakchu and Bhadra.

Out of these, Sita descends from Brahma-puri to the summit of Mt. Kesaraachal, then goes further down and falls upon the summit of Mt. Gandha-maadan, and from there flows through the area known as Bhadraa-shwa-varsha to finally fall into the salty ocean in the east.

The second branch Alkananda falls to the south of Brahma-puri, goes past countless summits of mountains to finally arrive at the summit of Mt. Hemkut. From there, it cascades down with tremendous speed and force down upon the plains of India (known as Bharat-varsha). Then it traverses the length of the land to fall and merge with the ocean in the south.

Chakchu, the third branch, reaches the summit of Mt. Malyawaan, and from there it flows through the area known as Ketumal-varsha, heading in the western direction to finally fall in the sour ocean in the west.

The fourth branch, Bhadra, falls from the summit of Mt Meru and descends to its north. Falling from one mountain upon another, it reaches the summit of Mt. Sringawaan. From there it flows through the area of the land known as Kuru-desh to finally fall in the northern ocean.

This river is known as the River of Gods or river Gangaa. This is the origin of the river in its celestial form. Refer: Smd. Bhagwat, 5/17/1-9.

When Lord Vaaman's feet were being washed as part of the ritual to honour the guest Brahmin by king Vaaman, Brahma the creator had collected this water in his Kamandalu (water pot) because it was very holy. Refer. Smd. Bhagwat, 8/21/4.

Later on, when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa (penance) to bring this holy river on the earth so that his ancestors who lay dead due to the curse of sage Kapil could be revived, Brahma told him that he must first prepare Lord Shiva to accept river Ganges on his head because when the river descends from heaven upon earth, it will do so with such tremendous force that the earth would not be able to bear it and would split into two. So Bhagirath did Tapa to please Lord Shiva who agreed to accept the cascading river on the lock of hairs on his head. Then he will gradually allow to let it down upon the plains is a stream that lacks the force by which the river falls thousands of miles from heaven. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/42/23-25, and 1/43/1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

Briefly this part of the story is as follows: King Sagar had done a great horse sacrifice known as 'Ashwamedh Yagya'. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his mischief and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

Now, king Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug up the entire earth in search of the horse, pursuing Indra relentlessly. During the process all the creatures who lived on the earth suffered immensely because their homes were demolished and they were uprooted from their natural habitats. This was what Indra wanted—to instigate Sagar to commit some sort of blunder that would invite the wrath of the creatures and the Brahmins, thereby inviting his own ruin. The Gods rushed to their patriarch Brahma, complaining about the developments. Brahma comforted them that they

should not worry because Lord Vishnu who is responsible for the welfare of the creation would certainly do something to rectify the damage and punish the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, even after searching the earth the sons could not find the sacrificial horse. When they reported this to their father, king Sagar, he strongly rebuked them and ordered them to go back and search once again. This time around, they dug up the subterranean world. Ultimately, they reached the hermitage of sage Kapil on the shore of the eastern ocean. The mischievous Indra had hidden the horse there, but sage Kapil had no idea that it was a stolen sacrificial horse. So, when Sagar's sons saw the horse there, they concluded that it was stolen by the sage, and they haughtily challenged him. The sage was very angry, and he cursed them, reducing them to ashes.

When these sixty thousand sons did not return even after a long time, king Sagar ordered his grandson Anshumaan to go and find out what had happened. Anshumaan followed the path taken by his uncles, and finally reached the place where he saw their ashes in a huge mound. Lamenting and grieving, he wanted to perform their last rites. He also found the horse grazing nearby. For doing the last rites he needed water. Just at that time, Lord Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu), who was the maternal uncle of his own uncles, came there and told Anshumaan that ordinary water won't liberate his uncles because they were reduced to ashes by the curse of a great sage named Kapil. For this, the water of the holy river Ganges is needed. So he must go and make an effort to bring Ganges to earth so that its water can flow over the ashes and provide your uncles deliverance. Meanwhile, he should take the sacrificial horse and go home to his grandfather.

King Sagar completed his sacrifice and returned to his capital. He did not know how to bring the celestial river of Gods to earth, and he died without accomplishing the task. After his death, Anshumaan ascended the throne. His son was king Dilip. Anshumaan abdicated the throne in favour of his son and went to the Himalayas to do severe Tapa, and died there.

King Dilip had a son named Bhagirath. Dilip did many sacrifices in order to bring river Ganges to earth so that his ancestor's souls could find deliverance, but failed. Worried and frustrated he fell sick and died.

Meanwhile, Bhagirath had no sons, but he still was determined to bring Ganges to earth and fulfill the long cherished desire of his father, grandfather and great grandfather. So he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his wise ministers and went to do the severest form of Tapa one can imagine of. His determination and noble resolve pleased Brahma, the creator, who revealed himself before him and asked him to request for a boon. Bhagirath replied that if Brahma really wants to grant him something then he should bless him that he be able to bring Ganges to earth and wash his ancestors with its holy water so that they can find deliverance. Brahma advised him that he must please Lord Shiva and request him to accept the river on his head prior to its reaching the surface of the earth—because if the river fell directly upon the earth it would split the latter into two with its tremendous force.

So, Bhagirath prayed to Shiva who was more than willing to accept Ganges on his head because the Lord knew that the river had its origin in the foot of Lord Vishnu. As soon as Shiva gave his consent to bear the river on his head, Brahma let his Kamandalu tilt and thus the mighty river Ganges came cascading down with a thunderous force to land upon the matted hairs of Lord Shiva. Ganges was very proud of its own origin and powers, so it thought that it will push Shiva to the under-world by its sheer force. Shiva wanted to teach Ganges a lesson not to be haughty, so the Lord contained the might of the swirling waters of the haughty Ganges in the lock of hairs on his head so much so that the river almost got lost amidst its huge crevices.

Bhagirath was confounded: after all the efforts made by him, the river still failed to reach the ground. So he did Tapa again to please Lord Shiva and ask him to allow Ganges to fall down to earth. Pleased with his sincerity and devotion, Lord Shiva allowed a thin stream of Ganges to escape from his head and fall in the 'Bindu-sarovar (lake)'. Immediately upon reaching this lake, Ganges branched off into seven streams. The seventh stream followed king Bhagirath who lead its path on a chariot to the spot where the ashes of his ancestors lay. As soon as the holy water of the Ganges touched the ashes, the souls of the sixty thousand sons of king Sagar found liberation and deliverance.

At that time, Brahma appeared and blessed Bhagirath that henceforth Ganges would be deemed to be his daughter and bear his name. It would be known by three names—viz. 'Tripatha-gaa', 'Dibyaa' and 'Bhagirathi'. Hence, the holy river Ganges also came to be known as 'Bhagirathi', the daughter of Bhagirath. Since it flows in the whole of the three worlds, the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world, it is known as 'Tripatha-gaa'—that which flows on three paths. And since it is a holy and divine river, it is known as 'Dibya'—the divine and holy one.

There is another version narrated in Padma Puran, Srishthi Khand. Here, sage Veda Vyas, who was narrating the Puran to Brahmin audience, told the story of the origin and descent upon the earth of the holy river Ganges in detail when they asked him about it. Briefly this story is as follows:

Veda Vyas said—'In some ancient time, when sage Narad asked Brahma how creation came into being, Brahma told him that at the time of creation, he had requested the Paraa-Prakriti, the primary-primordial Mother Nature, to become the primary cause of creation. Brahma told her that he would use her to create everything.

Hearing this, the Paraa-Prakriti divided herself into seven forms. These seven forms are the following—(i) Gayatri (from which were produced all the Vedas, Swasti, Swaha, Swadha, and Diksha—i.e. all things related to the fire sacrifice), (ii) Vaag-devi or Saraswati, the goddess of speech and knowledge, through whom knowledge and scriptures spread, (iii) Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity that was needed to sustain and take care of the needs of the creation), (iv) Uma (the consort of Lord Shiva and said to be Mother Goddess from whom all other Gods and Goddesses originated; she is also the one who became instrumental in spread of knowledge), (v) Shakti-beeja (cosmic dynamic energy that gives all the Mantras their inherent mystical powers and is responsible for injecting vitality, energy and force into this creation), (vi) Tapaswini (the patron goddess or the cosmic force overlooking Tapa—austerity and penances), (vii) and Dharma-dravaa (the inherent powers of Dharma—everything that is in accordance to the laws of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality).

Brahma thought that the last form, i.e. 'Dharma-dravaa', was the best of the seven forms, and since it was in a liquid form ('Dravaa' = liquid), he stored it into his Kamandalu (water pot).

Now, during the Lord's incarnation as Vaaman (the dwarf mendicant) when he had spread his left foot to measure the entire universe during the sacrifice of king Bali, this foot ruptured the sky and the heaven and appeared before Brahma. It was then that he washed the Lord's holy foot with the water that he had stored in his Kamandalu at the time of creation.

After the Lord's holy foot had been washed, this water fell on Mt. Hemkut. From there this water reached Lord Shiva who immediately placed it on his head because he realised it to be sanctified and holy as it had been used to wash the foot of Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Vaaman. So, this water now was established on the thick lock of hairs on the head of Lord Shiva.

Later on when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa with the intention of bringing this holy river on earth so that his dead ancestors could be revived and their souls could find peace, he had prayed to Lord Shiva to let the Ganges come down upon the earth. The Lord allowed its stream to descend upon the earth and follow Bhagirath across the land to the place where his ancestors lay dead. This is how the holy river descended upon earth and traversed eastwards following Bhagirath to finally merge into the ocean.]

तब प्रभु रिषिन्ह समेत नहाए । बिबिध दान महिदेवन्हि पाए ॥ ३ ॥

taba prabhu riṣinha samēta nahā'ē. bibidha dāna mahidēvanhi pā'ē. 3.

Then the Lord took bath (in the holy river Ganges) along with the sages¹.

The Brahmins (who were present on the banks of the river Ganges) got alms (donations, gifts) of various kinds². (3)

[Note—¹The word 'Rishi-nha' means 'in the company of or along with other sages', and it obviously refers to more than one sage. There are many reasons for use of the plural common noun here.

The fame and glory of Lord Ram had already spread far and wide. The story of sage Vishwamitra going to Ayodhya to bring Lord Ram and Laxman to his hermitage, killing of Tadakaa, Subahu and the rest of the demon army, and the magical feat of converting a stone into a lady, i.e. the liberation of Ahilya from her curse, was no longer a secret. This news must have spread like wild fire by word of mouth. The sages, hermits and other holy men of that part of the land were awe-struck and realised that the two princes were no ordinary humans, but surely they possessed some super-human divine powers.

So, as soon as the word spread that the great sage Vishwamitra is headed towards Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, a lot many holy men who lived along the route or even in areas from where they could manage to reach them, hurried to have a holy glimpse of the two divine brothers as well as sage Vishwamitra. Some of them met the trio on the way, some decided to assemble on the banks of river Ganges where they were sure that the three would come on their way to Janakpur. This is because it is a normal practice that when one goes somewhere and his path passes near some holy river or a pilgrim place, the traveler makes it a point to visit these places, pay his obeisance, take a bath in the river, and then move on with his journey.

So a huge throng of sages and other holy men had either joined them on the way or had assembled on the banks of river Ganges by the time Lord Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra arrived there.

Besides being eager to see Lord Ram because of his glorious and most magical deeds, the Lord's astounding charm and beauty was also instrumental in motivating the holy men to have a rare glimpse of the brothers. The holy men decided that they were no ordinary princes because they had seen so many of them, and they had also seen many great kings performing marvelous feats, but the divine aura that surrounded these brothers was unique and set them apart from the rest. The sages concluded therefore that they surely are the Supreme Being in a human form as predicted earlier by the scriptures. Otherwise, it is not a joke to kill the ferocious demons and liberate Ahilya so easily.

To add to this incentive was the privilege of meeting a great sage, Vishwamitra. Even today when some renowned holy men visit some place, huge crowd gathers to see him and take his blessings.

Added to this is another factor. It is observed as a routine affair that on the banks of holy rivers, especially Ganges which is regarded as the holiest, a large number of men,

holy and ordinary, are always present to take a bath to purify themselves and perform religious rituals. Since giving donations and gifts and making charities is part of such rituals, a large number of Brahmins collect there in the hope of a regular source of income and benefiting from such religious obligations. This is a daily routine affair that one can observe on the banks of this holy river anywhere in India. The banks are usually crowded by devotees, saints and Brahmins etc. who have come to make their ablutions.

Now, when Lord Ram and Laxman took their purification bath in the holy Ganges, they were accompanied by all these sages, seers, hermits and other holy men. The wise and learned sages and holy men had come to see Lord Ram because they knew that they are viewing a personified form of the Holy Spirit, the Supreme Being, and added to this was the bonus of seeking their divine blessings. Then there was the attraction of meeting sage Vishwamitra, an enlightened sage of immense spiritual powers.

One more remarkable point to note is this: A large number of sages and holy men are said to have done their ablutions in the company of Lord Ram. Then what happened? Did they accompany them onwards to Janakpur? Yes, they did. It is said that when sage Vishwamitra reached the outskirts of Janakpur, he saw a pleasant mango orchard, and asked Lord Ram and Laxman to stay there. They put up their camp at this site “along with the other sages” who were with them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 214.

Remember: Only sages and holy men are said to have joined Lord Ram in taking the bath in the river Ganges. No mention is made of ‘any princes or even the Brahmins’. Well, the answer is clear—(a) The princes of the realm had no insight to realise who Lord Ram and Laxman were; for them they were like any other son of a king, and hence worthy of no special attention. This is proved later on at the marriage venue at Janakpur when only some of the wise aged kings could realise the divinity of Lord Ram because they had heard of the Lord’s glorious deeds, but the majority of the assembled kings and princes were only interested in breaking the bow and marrying Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 246; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 267.

(b) The Brahmins were professional men; they knew how to perform rituals in a mechanical fashion but had no spiritual insight or acumen. They thronged banks of holy rivers and pilgrim places to earn money, and not to seek salvation. This is even true today as it was then, and has been ever since the dawn of civilization. There is vast difference between professional Brahmins who perform rituals and those who are known as true sages, seers and holy men.

²An important point here is that Lord Ram had nothing with him in material terms at that time to donate or gift to the Brahmins. So what did he do? He promised them that after he returns to his home at Ayodhya, he will fulfill his obligations and redeem his promises of gifts made to these Brahmins. This was and is still a routine practice—that if one cannot pay immediately, he gives an understanding that as soon as he reaches home he will send the money to the other person.

Hence, after making ablutions, Lord Ram promised the assembled Brahmins that he will make gifts to them later on when he returns home. This is why it is said that the ‘Brahmins got gifts’ instead of saying ‘Lord Ram made gifts to Brahmins’. These Brahmins ‘got an assurance of gifts from the Lord’ by way of a promise or vow, which was to be redeemed later on.]

हरषि चले मुनि बृंद सहाया । बेगि बिदेह नगर निअराया ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣi calē muni br̥nda sahāyā. bēgi bidēha nagara ni'arāyā. 4.

After that, the Lord who is a helper of the sages¹, cheerfully² proceeded from there, moving swiftly ahead to approach the city of Videha³. (4)

[Note—¹The phrase used in the text is “Muni Brinda Sahaayaa” which means ‘helper of the sages’, or one who comes to aid of the sages in times of need. In other words, the two brothers Ram and Laxman were always available to help the countless sages whenever they needed them.

²Here is it said that the Lord moved ahead ‘cheerfully’ after bathing in river Ganges. It is important to observe that while he moved from the place where Ahilya was liberated to the banks of river Ganges in a somber mood, the Lord now becomes cheerful once again.

This is because now he has taken a bath in the holy, all-purifying river Ganges, and has therefore symbolically washed-off his guilt of having had to touch a Brahmin woman, Ahilya, with his feet. He is also cheerful and happy because he has been able to take a bath in the company of so many sages and holy men. Then again, he has been able to make charity to Brahmins. All these things gave him a lot of satisfaction, and he became joyous once again.

Another reason to be cheerful and excited was that now they were very near the great city of Videha, where a great spectacle of the bow-breaking ceremony was awaiting them. Like any boys of their age, it was natural for Lord Ram and Laxman to become excited as they neared the city.

The third reason for their cheerfulness is that after bathing and relaxing on the banks of the Ganges, they felt very refreshed after the tiring journey from the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra.

³In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas it is said that Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra crossed the river Ganges on a boat to proceed ahead to Janakpur. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 2, 5.

This appears very logical because Janakpur is situated in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, on the other side of the river Ganges, whereas sage Vishwamitra’s hermitage as well as Ayodhya were located on this side of the river’s bank.]

पुर रञ्जिता राम जब देखी । हरषे अनुज समेत बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥

pura ramyatā rāma jaba dēkhī. haraṣē anuja samēta bisēṣī. 5.

When Lord Ram saw the beauty, the magnificence and the grandeur of the city (Videha) as he approached it, he was highly delighted together with his younger brother (Laxman). (5)

[Note—The two brothers were princes of a rich kingdom of Ayodhya. They knew how a great city, the capital of an important kingdom, should look like. When one approaches a capital city of a big country, its ambience and aura of importance begins to be felt from a distance. One gets the feeling that he is fast approaching a great city, a huge metropolis.

The Lord and his brother were excited because when they saw that the approaches to the city of Videha were so beautifully laid out and charming, it is sure that the city proper would naturally be a magnificent one. It is quite natural for and expected from boys of

their age to be excited at the prospect of visiting a wonderful city and go sightseeing in it. Hence, both Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman became excited.]

बापीं कूप सरित सर नाना । सलिल सुधासम मनि सोपाना ॥ ६ ॥
 गुंजत मंजु मत्त रस भृंगा । कूजत कल बहुबरन बिहंगा ॥ ७ ॥
 बरन बरन बिकसे बन जाता । त्रिबिध समीर सदा सुखदाता ॥ ८ ॥

bāpīṁ kūpa sarita sara nānā. salila sudhāsama mani sōpānā. 6.
 guṇjata maṇju matta rasa bhr̥ṅgā. kūjata kala bahubarana bihaṅgā. 7.
 barana barana bikasē bana jātā. tribidha samīra sadā sukhadātā. 8.

[In these following verses, the beauty of the city of Videha or Janakpur, the capital of king Janak, is being described.]

There were many large water tanks (or step-wells), wells, rivers and ponds that were filled with water as sweet as nectar. Their steps were studded with precious gems. (6)

Bees which had become intoxicated by drinking nectar to their fill were buzzing everywhere. Beautiful birds of different kinds were hopping, cooing and chirping around merrily. (7)

Lotus flowers of different shades of colours bloomed, and a delightful breeze that was sweet, fragrant and soft constantly blew. (8)

[Note—The general scene is that of plenty of verdant greenery and abundance of vibrant plant and animal life. There was cheerfulness and happiness all around. There were water bodies, birds and insects, flowers and sweet breeze. All the ingredients that make one's heart jump in joy were present.]

दो०. सुमन बाटिका बाग बन बिपुल बिहंग निवास ।
 फूलत फलत सुपल्लवत सोहत पुर चहुँ पास ॥ २१२ ॥

dōhā.

sumana bāṭikā bāga bana bipula bihaṅga nivāsa.
 phūlata phalata supallavata sōhata pura cahum̐ pāsa. 212.

Countless flower gardens, parks, orchards, groves and mini-forests that were verdant with greenery and brimming with animal and plant life, where birds of different varieties lived cheerfully, and which were all rich with blossoming trees, blooming flowers, verdant leaves etc., flourished all around the city, and adorned (circled) it from all sides. (Doha no. 212)

[Note—In other words, the sprawling city was rich in greenery and had a vibrant animal and plant life. It wasn't a concrete jungle or an over-crowded city with no green space for parks and gardens which are like lungs for a place.

Till this Doha, the outside of the city of Videha has been described. In other words, Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra have reached the outskirts of the city, but they

have not entered the city proper; this is proved by the fact that they had stopped and encamped near a mango orchard outside the city: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 214 which we shall be reading below shortly.

But the whole set of verses next, extending from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214 describe the city of Janakpur proper. How did this happen given the fact that Lord Ram and his group are still in the suburbs?

Well, the answer is that the narrator of this epic Ram Charit Manas, saint Goswami Tulsidas, treats himself as a scribe—and not as a poet or an author—who follows his revered Lord Sri Ram closely from behind, penning down silently for posterity whatever he heard and saw. This fact that Tulsidas does not regard himself as a great scholar or poet, but is writing this story merely to clean and purify his mind and pen, is clearly asserted by him in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8, 11; (ii) Doha no. 10 and its Chaupai line nos. 7 as well as Chanda line nos. 1-2; (iii) Doha no. 13 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-10; and finally (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14.

Now therefore, why does he describe the inner part of the city of Janakpur though his Lord Ram is still on its outskirts? The answer to this question is this: It is quite possible that when Lord Ram and other sages who were accompanying him were walking to Janakpur, others travelers who were also going there joined them on the way. When a group of new visitors who are on their way to a place meet other fellow travelers who are well acquainted with that place, it is quite natural that a conversation starts whereby the old hands tell the newcomers about the city and its wonderful sights. This is what might have happened in this case. Tulsidas is just narrating the events as they happened, so it looks odd that he will add something from his own side before it actually happened. So this eventuality seems most probable—that the fellow travelers had described the city of Janakpur to Lord Ram and Laxman on the way. This description continues in the next three lines.

When Laxman heard about the fascinating city, he desired in his heart to go and see it. This is clear later on in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 218 that we shall be reading below.

Now, the next question arises that when Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra had started on their journey for Janakpur, they were alone; no one had accompanied them at the start of the journey. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212. Then how did a group form in which there were many sages and holy men who would be telling Lord Ram and Laxman about the city of Janakpur and its delights? The fact that a group had formed after the Lord took a bath in the river Ganges and moved ahead from there, as well as at the time when he reached Janakpur is endorsed in (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 212, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 214 respectively.

So, what may have happened? The fame and glory of Lord Ram had already spread far and wide. The story of sage Vishwamitra going to Ayodhya to bring Lord Ram and Laxman to his hermitage, killing of Tadakaa, Subahu and the rest of the demon army, and the magical feat of converting a stone into a lady, i.e. the liberation of Ahilya from her curse, was no longer a secret. This news must have spread like wild fire by word of mouth. The sages, hermits and other holy men of that part of the land were awe-struck and realised that the two princes were no ordinary humans, but surely they possessed some super-human divine powers. They were all aware of the prophesy that the Supreme Lord would one day come to eliminate the demons and free the earth from their terror. So obviously they deduced that these two boys must be the Lord for the simple reason that

killing of Tadakaa, Subahu and the huge demon army by two princes without any other help was unthinkable and impossible. Added to this was the liberation of Ahilya which itself was proof of the divine nature of Lord Ram.

So, as soon as the word spread that the great sage Vishwamitra is headed towards Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, a lot many holy men who lived along the route or even in areas from where they could manage to reach them, hurried to have a holy glimpse of the two divine brothers as well as sage Vishwamitra. Some of them met the trio on the way, some decided to assemble on the banks of river Ganges where they were sure that the three would come to take a bath on their way to Janakpur.

Eager to remain with the Lord for as long as they practically could, they told him and sage Vishwamitra that they were all headed for Janakpur to attend the bow ceremony. And that like journeymen joining others headed in a common direction, they all formed a group moving to Janakpur. The group must have swelled as more and more sages joined in the hope of having a divine sight of Lord Ram and spending some wonderful days in his company.

So a huge throng of sages and other holy men had formed on the way to Janakpur. All were eager to talk with the two brothers and be close to them. So what sort of conversation must have been struck? As is normal in the case of tourists and visitors to new cities, when they learnt that the two brothers were going to Janakpur for the first time, they began their narration of the city and its wonderful charms to Lord Ram and Laxman. This is a normal thing amongst travelers; old hands give their advice to newcomers into a city. After all, some excuse had to be found by these sages to talk with Lord Ram and Laxman.

Sage Vishwamitra, meanwhile, kept quiet, for he did not want to prevent these aged and devoted sages and holy men to enjoy the Lord's company for a while; why would he. After all, they too had the right for spiritual bliss and happiness like he has.

Tulsidas was mentally following his Lord Sri Ram quietly from behind. He heard this conversation, and like a true scribe, he jotted down the dialogue, and is now telling us what he heard about Janakpur in the following verses.]

चौ०. बनइ न बरनत नगर निकई । जहाँ जाइ मन तहँ लोभाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bana'i na baranata nagara nikā'ī. jahām' jā'i mana tahamīm' lōbhā'ī. 1.

The charm, beauty and attractiveness of the city (of Janakpur) surpassed all imagination. Wherever one went, one's heart and mind were fascinated and captivated by it (and for all practical purposes it appeared to be a virtual heavenly city on earth). (1)

[Note—Whereas it was possible to describe the general view of the outskirts of the city as narrated in the previous verses, it is not possible to do so for the inside of the city because it is so fascinating and wonderful that wherever one rests his eyes, one is awe-struck by its beauty and charm. One part of the city is so diverse and different from the other that the mind and intellect fail to find words to describe them properly and correctly. So it is better to just outline the main features as narrated in the following verses.]

चारु बजारु बिचित्र अँबारी । मनिमय बिधि जनु स्वकर सँवारी ॥ २ ॥

cāru bajāru bicitra amḃārī. manimaya bidhi janu svakara samṃvārī. 2.

The markets (i.e. the shops lining the two sides of the streets) and the market places (i.e. the areas designated for shops and other business activities) were well laid out and very magnificent to behold. There were wonderful balconies studded with priceless gems, and looked as if the creator (Brahma) had himself crafted them with his own hands. (2)

[Note—After having entered the outer limits of the great city, Lord Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra are moving through its outer market area. There are rows of shops on the ground floor, and the upper floors have balconies. These were probably residential quarters.

Remember: A great capital city has many far-flung areas that we like to call the greater metropolitan areas of the city. The city's municipal boundaries extend for many miles around the city center where the central government offices and other power centers such as the secretariat, the presidential buildings, the prime minister's and other ministers' residences and offices etc. are located. The same thing applies to countries ruled by monarchs. The king's palace is located usually in the center of a planned city which extends for tens of miles around.

If one enters a large city he will observe that there are numerous market places and residential colonies that are self-sufficient and complete towns in themselves, spreading for miles away from the central hub, the power center, of the main city.

This is exactly what we read here about Janakpur. This will be evident soon when we read that the invited kings and princes pitched their camps near ponds and rivers on the outskirts of the city. And when sage Vishwamitra saw a pleasant site, which was a mango orchard, he decided to stay there with Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 214.]

धनिक बनिक बर धनद समाना । बैठे सकल बस्तु लै नाना ॥ ३ ॥

dhanika banika bara dhanada samānā. baiṭhē sakala bastu lai nānā. 3.

In the shops, rich merchants who were like personified forms of the patron god of wealth, known as Kuber or “dhanada”, sit with their wares and merchandise of all kinds. (3)

[Note—The shops are well-stocked and the shop-keepers look well-off. This is expected. As soon as the word spread that the king has invited a large number of kings and princes for the marriage of his daughter, all the business families of the city stocked up and piled their goods in anticipation of the huge crowd of visitors, and its consequent opportunity for windfall transactions.

This is a normal practice even in today's modern world: whenever there is a sports meet or some other occasion for huge gatherings such as some religious festival, businesses of shopkeepers' boom.]

चौहट सुंदर गलीं सुहाई । संतत रहहिं सुगंध सिंचाई ॥ ४ ॥

मंगलमय मंदिर सब केरें । चित्रित जनु रतिनाथ चितेरें ॥ ५ ॥

cauhaṭa sundara galīm suhāṭī. santata rahahim sugandha siṅcāṭī. 4.
maṅgalamaya mandira saba kērēm. citrita janu ratinātha citērēm. 5.

The city squares and its lanes and by-lanes were lovely (like its main streets). They were washed, cleaned, spruced up and sprayed with perfumes on a regular basis. (4)

All the buildings (residences, shops, places of worship etc.) had an auspicious aura about them; they were so wonderful to behold that they appeared to be beautiful paintings made by Kamdeo, the husband of Rati and the patron god of the virtues of beauty, charm and magificence, who appears to have painted them himself. (5)

[Note—Kamdeo is the patron god of things that are characterized by beauty and charm.

The buildings of the city were so magnificent and wondrous to look at that they appear to be picture-post card perfect. Even in our current time, we have so many beautiful cities with so many charming buildings that tourists take away their photos as mementos. Tourist spots are flooded with post-cards of beautiful buildings that are landmarks of a city or characterize it in general terms.

Janakpur had large city squares which were well tended. Its lanes and by-lanes were washed and kept clean; there weren't stinking and full of filth.]

पुर नर नारि सुभग सुचि संता । धरमसील ग्यानी गुनवंता ॥ ६ ॥

pura nara nāri subhaga suci santā. dharamasīla gyānī gunavantā. 6.

The residents of the city were noble, honest and of a simple nature, being free from pretensions and deceit (subhaga). They were of a clean and pure heart and mind (suci); they were saintly, pious and holy (santā); they were followers of the law of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and ethics) (dharamasīla); they were wise, intelligent and learned (gyānī); and they possessed good virtues of all kinds (gunavantā). (6)

[Note—No matter how beautiful a city is and how wonderful it is managed, but all this is useless if its inhabitants are unworthy of it. If the citizens of a city are unruly and unethical, if they are utterly selfish and exploitative, if they are cruel and ruthless, if they lack civil sense and do not show respect to each other—then obviously such a city becomes one like Lanka, the golden city of the demons.

Who will like to live with ruffians, scoundrels and thugs as neighbours? Everyone wishes to live in a neighbourhood where the people are friendly, helpful, courteous and law-abiding.

Any city could be artificially decked up for some special occasion, but the nature of its citizens can't be changed.

It's like the case of a human body. What is the good of having a well-built and handsome physical body if the man himself is cruel, selfish and animal-like? Everyone hates him. So is the case with a city. If its residents are nice, others flock to this city. On the other hand, no matter what good prospects city offers, if the guest feels he is unwelcome and is afraid every other moment for his own safety, he will abandon the city forthwith.]

अति अनूप जहँ जनक निवासू । बिथकहिं बिबुध बिलोकि बिलासू ॥ ७ ॥

होत चकित चित कोट बिलोकी । सकल भुवन सोभा जनु रोकी ॥ ८ ॥

ati anūpa jaham̐ janaka nivāsū. bithakahim̐ bibudha bilōki bilāsū. 7.
hōta cakita cita kōṭa bilōkī. sakala bhuvana sōbhā janu rōkī. 8.

[Now, the immediate area around the king's palace is being described briefly.]

The place where king Janak's palace was situated was exceptionally marvelous and fabulous, and it stood apart from the rest of the city in its beauty and magnificence. Even the Gods were awe-struck by its splendour and grandeur. (7)

The fortification walls around the palace held the mind enthralled, and it looked that it has enclosed within its walls all the magnificence and beauty of the universe. (8)

[Note—If the city is so exceedingly magnificent and wondrous that wherever one looks he finds it more enchanting than the other places as all the places are uniquely beautiful and charming exceedingly, with their glamour and beauty holding the beholder's mind and heart spell-bound as no where else such a city of equal comparison exists in this world, it is no wonder that the palace of the city's king and the area surrounding it would be special and more striking than the rest of the city.]

Some of the capitals of kings were built within the walls of the fort—like the case of Lanka, the capital of the demon kingdom. It was a huge fort surrounded from the outside with a high wall. It had four massive doors or gates at its four corners. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

The same was the design of Ayodhya, the capital city of king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram. It was surrounded by high walls on all its sides. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 27.

But in the case of Janakpur, only the central area around the king's palace was surrounded by a wall, and the rest of the city spilled out far beyond its ramparts for miles on end. The immediate area around the king's palace resembled like a small fortress or castle, while the rest of the city sprawled beyond it.]

दो०. धवल धाम मनि पुरट पट सुघटित नाना भाँति ।
सिय निवास सुंदर सदन सोभा किमि कहि जाति ॥ २१३ ॥

dōhā.

dhavala dhāma mani puraṭa paṭa sughaṭita nānā bhām̐ti.
siya nivāsa sundara sadana sōbhā kimi kahi jāti. 213.

[This Doha describes the palace where Sita, the eldest daughter of king Janak, lived.]

The palace where Sita ("Siya") lived had clean white walls which reflected light to make them appear radiant. The palace had golden doors and windows studded with gems, and over those hanged curtains of different varieties with fine golden embroidery, and embellished with gems and pearls.

How can one describe the opulence, the beauty and the magnificence of the personal residence of Sita? [That is, it is impossible to describe its glamour and beauty in words.] (Doha no. 213)

[Note—Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu and the patron goddess of material wealth and prosperity. Obviously then, her personal quarters is expected to be marvelous. Its opulence was beyond description.

If the doors were made of gold, the walls cannot be simple brick structures. They were also studded with diamonds and crystal, giving them a shiny, glittering appearance.

Remember: Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra are still on the outskirts of the city; they haven't reached its central area. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 214 which we will be reading shortly.

Hence this description of the king's palace and that of his daughter's must not be construed as being watched by the Lord himself. Actually, Goswami Tulsidas, the author of this epic, is giving us a preview of the city. It's almost like going through a brochure describing a fascinating capital city. See note appended to Doha no. 212 above.]

चौ०. सुभग द्वार सब कुलिस कपाटा । भूप भीर नट मागध भाटा ॥ १ ॥
बनी बिसाल बाजि गज साला । हय गय रथ संकुल सब काला ॥ २ ॥
सूर सचिव सेनप बहुतेरे । नृपगृह सरिस सदन सब केरे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

subhaga dvāra saba kulisa kapātā. bhūpa bhīra naṭa māgadha bhātā. 1.

banī bisāla bāji gaja sālā. haya gaya ratha saṅkula saba kālā. 2.

sūra saciva sēnapa bahutērē. nṛpagṛha sarisa sadana saba kērē. 3.

All the doors were beautiful and were studded with diamonds. [Or it may mean that the outer doors of the palace and the gates of the fortress wall had armour plates on them. These armoured plates were made of diamond.]¹

These doors and gates were always crowded by throngs of feudal princes (junior or subordinate kings) as well as dancers, bards, minstrels and heralds. [They stood there for their turn to be heard by the king.]¹ (1)

There were huge stables for horses and large grounds earmarked for elephants. They were always full with horses, elephants and chariots. (2)

There were many palaces belonging to brave warriors, ministers and army commanders which were similar in beauty and grandeur to the palace of the king. [The king made it a point to let his ministers and chief army commanders feel important and respected because he was wise enough to understand that he depends upon them for his own survival.]² (3)*

[Note—¹The entire objective of this narration is to highlight the opulence, majesty and grandeur of the king and his capital. This was no ordinary king; he was like an emperor because so many feudal lords were waiting at the door to have an audience with him.

²The king had a huge army consisting of cavalry that had war horses, elephant brigades, as well as infantry made up of strong and brave warriors.

*One very important to note is that Tulsidas has described the cities of Lord Ram and Sita, i.e. Ayodhya and Janakpur respectively, in almost identical terms. This is because both are equally adorable for him; because they are manifestations of Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi respectively. Tulsidas cannot insult one by making it look that the other is superior. Even a cursory reading of how Ayodhya looks and comparing it with the

description with Janakpur will clear all doubts in this respect. Both the cities awed the Gods; both were equally magnificent and wonderful; both defied description.

Whereas Janakpur is described in Baal Kand at the following places—(i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 224; (iii) from Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 289, the grandeur of Ayodhya is narrated in the following places—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; (ii) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297; (iv) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 4; (v) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23; and (vi) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 29.]

पुर बाहेर सर सरित समीपा । उतरे जहँ तहँ बिपुल महीपा ॥ ४ ॥

देखि अनूप एक अँवराई । सब सुपास सब भाँति सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

कौसिक कहेउ मोर मनु माना । इहाँ रहिअ रघुबीर सुजाना ॥ ६ ॥

pura bāhēra sara sarita samīpā. utarē jaham̐ taham̐ bipula mahīpā. 4.
dēkhi anūpa ēka am̐varā'ī. saba supāsa saba bhām̐ti suhā'ī. 5.
kausika kahē'u mōra manu mānā. ihām̐ rahi'a raghubīra sujānā. 6.

[Now, we go back to where Lord Ram and his group of travelers are on the outskirts of the city.]

On the outskirts of the city, countless invited kings and princes had pitched their camps near ponds and rivers and other water bodies. (1)

There was a beautiful mango orchard. It was very comfortable for staying (as all the necessary basic things needed for a comfortable stay were available there—such as water, shade, fruits, a general pleasant environment, and open ground that was clean, even and soft enough to pitch up a camp). (2)

Seeing it, Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) told Lord Ram—‘Oh Raghubir (i.e. the brave Raghu, Lord Ram)! I like this place. Let us stop here for our stay.’¹ (3)

[Note—¹The wise sage Vishwamitra did not wish to enter the city right away. Had he been alone he might have thought of going straight to the palace of the king, Janak, as he had done at Ayodhya. When a great sage or seer goes to a king, he does not stay outside the city, waiting for the king to come and invite him. Instead, they go straight to the king who rushes out of the palace as soon as he hears that a sage is standing at his palace door.

But in this case the situation was different. Vishwamitra was not alone; he was accompanied by two princes, Ram and Laxman. They were not ordinary princes, but belonged to another great kingdom of Ayodhya. King Janak had not invited them. This will be very clear later on when the king actually meets Vishwamitra and asks him about these two boys. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

Vishwamitra observed that the invited kings and princes were pitching their camps here and there outside the city. So he decided to stop somewhere nearby to maintain the dignity and respect of Lord Ram and Laxman who their father, king Dasrath, had entrusted him with. It would not be proper and dignified to go to the gate of king Janak with these two noble princes in tow. They were not his junior sages or students, for then it would have been alright for him to go straight to Janak's palace as great sages were

always accompanied by their junior sages or students or followers. To go to the king direct would be insulting for Lord Ram and Laxman's dignity and self-respect.

Vishwamitra decided therefore to stay outside the city in deference to the self-respect and dignity of two great princes Ram and Laxman, and wait for king Janak to come himself and welcome them.]

भलेहिं नाथ कहि कृपानिकेता । उतरे तहँ मुनिबृंद समेता ॥ ७ ॥

bhalēhim nātha kahi kṛpānikētā. utarē taham̐ munibṛnda samētā. 7.

The Lord (Ram), who is like a treasury or abode of grace, mercy and compassion, replied—'Alright Lord, so be it.' Then he and other accompanying sages stopped there to encamp. (7)

[Note—Lord Ram is described as being merciful and gracious here because he realised that all the sages in the group were tired and wanted to rest. If he insisted to move further ahead in his eagerness to enter the city, they will not find rest. Besides this, sages are accustomed to live in natural surroundings, and not in congested places or guest houses of a city. So even if they moved ahead and actually entered the city to take up lodging in some guest house or inn specially prepared to host visitors coming to attend the bow-ceremony, it will cause great inconvenience to the accompanying sages.

Hence, he readily agreed at once to the suggestion of Vishwamitra to pitch camp in the mango grove. Surely, if it was to the liking of sage Vishwamitra it would also be to the liking of other sages in the group, the Lord deduced.

It is important to note here that the 'merciful and compassionate' Lord gave precedence to the convenience of the sages over his own comfort. Personally he would have been more comfortable in a building with all facilities as he was a prince accustomed to material comforts, but the happiness of sages was of priority for him. Therefore instead of suggesting politely that it would be better to enter the city and find accommodation in some inn or lodging place, he agreed to encamp in the open ground.]

बिस्वामित्र महामुनि आए । समाचार मिथिलापति पाए ॥ ८ ॥

bisvāmitra mahāmuni ā'ē. samācāra mithilāpati pā'ē. 8.

Meanwhile, the king of Mithila (king Janak) heard the news that the great sage Vishwamitra has come¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/61, stanza no. 1 also.]

दो0. संग सचिव सुचि भूरि भट भूसुर बर गुर ग्याति ।

चले मिलन मुनिनायकहि मुदित राउ एहि भाँति ॥ २१४ ॥

dōhā.

saṅga saciva suci bhūri bhaṭa bhūsura bara gura gyāti.
calē milana munināyakahi mudita rā'u ēhi bhāmṭi. 214.

As soon as he (Janak) got this news, the king summoned his senior ministers who were wise and noble-hearted, as well as many senior warriors, army commanders, noble Brahmins, his Guru (royal priest, Shatanand), and other senior members of the royal family and members of the society, and proceeded very cheerfully to meet the great sage (Vishwamitra) who himself was like a king amongst sages. (Doha no. 214)

[Note—It is noteworthy here that Vishwamitra is described as being a 'king amongst sages'. The idea is that one great king (Janak) is going to meet another great king (Vishwamitra)! They are outstanding in their respective fields.

Remember: King Janak was highly regarded as an enlightened king of his time. He was well versed in metaphysics and was a highly realised soul. This proof lies in the fact that he used to hold regular religious conclaves in a grand scale where not only discourses were given by great seers, sages and scriptural scholars but special sessions for debates and discussions were held where great prizes were announced for the winner. This is evident when we study the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda where one such episode is narrated in its Canto 3.

It is also described in the same Upanishad how Janak had discussed profound metaphysical topics with the great sage Yagyawalkya in Canto 4.

Another place where sage Yagyawalkya teaches king Janak is the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. In its Brahman (Canto) 7, verse nos. 1-4, the king is taught on the spiritual importance of the sacred ash known as the Bhasma. Verse no. 5 of this Brahman 7 says that king Janak accompanied sage Pippalaad to the divine abode of Prajapati Brahma, the creator, to learn more about the Bhasma. This shows that Janak was a contemporary of sage Pippalaad.

The level of Janak's learning and erudition is evident from another incident when sage Shukdeo, the enlightened son of sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas, compiled the Upanishads, and written the voluminous Purans, was advised by his learned father to go to king Janak to learn profound principles of metaphysics and spiritualism. Janak had tested Shukdeo's eligibility, aptitude and competence by making him wait for prolonged time before even giving him a hearing. The entire episode along with the profound teachings of Janak forms the subject matter of the text of Canto 2 of the Mahopanishad of the Sam Veda tradition.]

चौ०. कीन्ह प्रनामु चरन धरि माथा । दीन्हि असीस मुदित मुनिनाथा ॥ १ ॥
बिप्रबृंद सब सादर बंदे । जानि भाग्य बड़ राउ अनंदे ॥ २ ॥
कुसल प्रसन्न कहि बारहिं बारा । बिस्वामित्र नृपहि बैठारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kīnha pranāmu carana dhari māthā. dīnhi asīsa mudita munināthā. 1.
biprabṛnda saba sādara bandē. jāni bhāgya baṛa rā'u anandē. 2.

kusala prasna kahi bārahīm bārā. bisvāmitra nṛpahi baiṭhārā. 3.

The king (Janak) bowed before the sage (Vishwamitra) by putting his head on his feet. The sage on his part cheerfully blessed the king. (1)

The king then paid his respects to all the accompanying sages, and felt very privileged and glad to have the opportunity to pay his obeisance to so many great holy men who have come to visit him. (2)

Then sage Vishwamitra repeatedly asked the king about his welfare and respectfully gave him a seat to sit down near him. (3)

[Note—Meeting of Janak and sage Vishwamitra has also been briefly described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/61.

It is a normal practice that when a group of noble men or holy men arrive at someone's place, the host shows special honours to the chief of the group. In this case, the chief was sage Vishwamitra, so king put his head on his feet to honour him and pay his respects to him. For the rest of the sages he may have simply bowed his head and offered his greetings.

Similarly, sage Vishwamitra reciprocated Janak's gesture by giving him special blessings and asking about his welfare. This does not mean that he neglected others in the king's company—there were senior ministers, army commanders, Brahmins, members of the royal family and even the royal priest. All of them were shown due respect, but special attention was paid to their king, Janak.

A very significant point is to be noted here. When sage Vishwamitra met king Dasrath, he did not either bless him or asked for his welfare, whereas here he is doing it with respect to Janak. [Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 207 with respect to the sage's meeting with Dasrath.]

The reason is that in the case of Dasrath, the sage was under great mental tension as he was unsure whether or not the king would accept his request to send Ram and Laxman with him. The sage wanted to maintain his dignified posture and the external appearance of not being too submissive before the king to hint him that he is serious on the matter for which he has come, and would not tolerate dithering and fooling around. The sage willingly created a stern atmosphere about himself so that Dasrath would think thrice before denying. But the sage learnt a bitter lesson there. He discovered to his horror that the king did not fear him at all, and he straight away refused to send Ram and Laxman with him.

Then the sage must have realised that had he been courteous and shown due respect to the king, there were greater chances of him accepting his request. The sage deduced that the king was afraid of the sage's stern manners, and that he did not wish to send his beloved sons with such a stern-looking sage who did not even know how to smile. The king feared that his sons would be treated roughly and without the basic respect they deserved as princes if he did send them with Vishwamitra who does not know how to properly treat kings and their family members.

So this time when he met Janak he acted courteously and showed due respect to the king. Then again, on this occasion he had no mental tension, and was in a cheerful mood. There was no element of uncertainty this time around, as he knew the forthcoming developments due to his foresight.

Another factor was that this time he had Lord Ram and Laxman with him, and he had already discovered their potentials and might. So he was very certain that he would not go empty-handed from the bow-breaking ceremony. The very fact that Janak was the father of Sita, the personified form of goddess Laxmi and the divine consort of Lord Ram was one other factor for the sage showing so much respect to him.

But the most important factor which made Vishwamitra show so much respect to him as compared to Dasrath was the fact that the sage knew about the level of Janak's spiritual enlightenment, his erudition and sagacity, his knowledge of metaphysical principles and scriptures. So Janak deserved this respect. Refer to note of Doha no. 214 above. Unfortunately, though Lord Vishnu became a son of Dasrath in the form of Lord Ram, the king was no match with Janak in this respect. And this is the reason why Vishwamitra desisted in showing great respect to Dasrath other than mere formalities.]

तेहि अवसर आए दोउ भाई । गए रहे देखन फुलवाई ॥ ४ ॥

स्याम गौर मृदु बयस किसोरा । लोचन सुखद बिस्व चित चोरा ॥ ५ ॥

tēhi avasara ā'ē dō'u bhā'ī. ga'ē rahē dēkhana phulavā'ī. 4.

syāma gaura mṛdu bayasa kisōrā. lōcana sukhada bisva cita cōrā. 5.

At that moment, the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) arrived there. They had gone away to see the flower garden. (4)

They had dark and fair complexions respectively, were of a young age, delicate in countenance, and presented a sight that provided bliss to the eyes of the beholder. There is no wonder in it because their charm was so astounding that it held the entire world enthralled and captivated. (5)

[Note—When Janak came, Lord Ram and Laxman were out visiting some garden. They arrived at the scene when all were seated. As soon as they came, all eyes turned towards them, and all those present were dumb-struck by their charm and bewitching beauty. Their eyes seemed to be riveted at Lord Ram and Laxman.

Perhaps the two brothers had gone to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra so that he can do his worship rituals. Or perhaps they had gone out of curiosity to see the nearby garden while the sages did their daily worship rituals and rested.

Sage Vishwamitra had purposely sent them the garden to avoid their presence at the time Janak arrives. This is because the wise sage correctly thought that at the moment the king arrives, the latter's attention would be focused on the sage, wishing him and paying his obeisance to him. This would mean that Ram and Laxman, who were not only great princes but ones with astounding potentials and divine powers to whom special treatment should be normally given, would be neglected. There were many other sages in the group, and the king would not pay equal attention to each of them; it is practically not possible. The king would naturally think that these two boys were some students of Vishwamitra who have accompanied him to Janakpur like so many other sages in the group.

Vishwamitra would not like this to happen. He planned things in such a way that when Lord Ram and Laxman are first seen by the king and his retinue, all attention is focused on these two brothers. So he told them to go to the garden to bring flowers for his worship formalities, timing their coming back so that the king would have completed his welcoming formalities and would be in a relaxed mind.]

उठे सकल जब रघुपति आए । बिस्वामित्र निकट बैठाए ॥ ६ ॥

uṭhē sakala jaba raghupati ā'ē. bisvāmitra nikṭa baiṭhā'ē. 6.

When the Lord of the Raghu's dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram) came, everyone stood up. [Wonderful! It was a spontaneous response. The two brothers had such a dynamic personality, an air of elegance, authority and dignity around them that all the assembled people were instantly impressed and concluded that some great prince has walked in. This is what Vishwamitra had really wanted—that the brothers' should make a dramatic presence before king Janak and his courtiers when they had finished their formal exchange of pleasantries with the guest sage so that their undivided attention could be focused on Lord Ram and Laxman.]¹

Sage Vishwamitra affectionately seated them beside him². (6)

[Note—¹As has been noted above in the note of verse no. 5, Vishwamitra's tactic worked extremely well. When Lord Ram and Laxman arrived, all those present were stunned by their dynamic personality. It was obvious to them that they were not ordinary princes but some exalted and highly acclaimed personalities who deserve respect and honour. This is proved by all of them standing up spontaneously.

²Vishwamitra wanted to be sure that the assembled persons understood that these two boys are very special. So he called them and gave them a seat close to himself—indicating that he loves them and they are very dear and close to him.

The assembly, which was already wonderstruck by the two princes, was more awed when they saw that the great sage Vishwamitra was showing such love and affection to them, treating them with respect himself by calling them near and giving them a seat near his own. That means, they obviously deduced, that these two princes were very special.

Once Lord Ram and Laxman were seated, all the rest also took their respective seats and sat down before the sage.]

भाए सब सुखी देखि दोउ भ्राता । बारि बिलोचन पुलकित गाता ॥ ७ ॥
मूरति मधुर मनोहर देखी । भयउ बिदेहु बिदेहु बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

bha'e saba sukhī dēkhi dō'u bhrātā. bāri bilōcana pulakita gātā. 7.
mūrati madhura manōhara dēkhī. bhaya'u bidēhu bidēhu bisēṣī. 8.

When the assembled people (i.e. king Janak, his courtiers, ministers, the royal priest and the Brahmins who had accompanied the king to welcome the sage) saw the two brothers, all of them felt extremely glad and exhilarated so much so that tears of ecstasy gushed out of their eyes and their bodies become thrilled. (7)

King Janak was known as 'Videha' (literally one who has no awareness of his gross physical body because he is enlightened and remains submerged in the thoughts of the Atma, the pure conscious soul, by being virtually in a state of perpetual Samadhi, a trance-like state of transcendental existence). When he (Videha) saw the extremely sweet, bewitchingly beautiful and very enchanting image (form) of the Lord, he was so ecstatic that he lost whatever awareness he had of himself and his surroundings. That is, he truly became a 'Videha'—one who has no awareness or consciousness of the existence of the physical body and his surroundings¹. [Lord Ram's enigmatic beauty and magnetic charm that were of an esoteric and enigmatic nature had completely bowled-over Janak and he had forgotten for once that he is supposed to be immune to physical charms and attractions.] (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/61, stanza no. 3 also.

We see with our eyes; the perception of beauty is the subject matter of the eye. So when the assembly saw Lord Ram and Laxman's beautiful forms, their eyes responded with tears of joy. The august assembly became ecstatic and emotional upon seeing them. It was a natural surge of love and affection that heaved in their hearts, forcing tears to well-up and stream out of their eyes spontaneously in response.

King Janak too was ecstatic, but his condition was far more emotional than the rest of assembled people. This is because he was highly self-realised and always remained engrossed in perpetual meditation. The Atma, a person's soul, is pure consciousness, and it is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness. This cosmic Consciousness is represented by Lord Ram as he is a personified form of the Supreme Being.

Just like the case of the mighty ocean heaving at the sight of the full moon, causing high tides, the blissful state of Janak reached a new high of ecstasy when he saw Lord Ram. His individual Atma heaved and surged forward when it came near the supreme Atma, the 'Parmatma' represented by Lord Ram, attempting to extend its reach to subtly touch it and draw in from the eternal fountain of supreme bliss.

This situation can be understood by another example. When a very powerful and huge piece of magnet is brought near smaller pieces of magnets, it is the latter that are attracted to the former, and not the other way round. So, when the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, was so near, the fraction of it that lived in the body of Janak as his individual Atma was instantly attracted to it like the smaller magnet getting pulled towards the large magnet.

The condition of Janak can be compared to the bird known as Chakor. When this bird sees the full moon, it forgets about everything else and fixes its gaze on it. When the moon travels across the sky, the Chakor too follows its path, bending its head and slowly turning it to follow the moon.

Janak was stunned beyond measure; he became speechless and immobile. This condition of his is being summarized by saying that 'he truly became a Videha'—one who has lost complete awareness or consciousness of the body.

¹We shall read later on that the wise king Janak had once again forgot about his reputation as a wise and enlightened king who is detached from the world and neutral towards all its attractions when he had become emotional at the time of Sita's departure with Lord Ram for Ayodhya after their marriage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 338. At that time also, the erudite poet-bard Tulsidas has used the word "Videha" to drive home the point that in spite of being detached and dispassionate towards this gross world, Janak had for once lost all self-control out of his love for Sita and Lord Ram.]

दो०. प्रेम मगन मनु जानि नृपु करि बिबेकु धरि धीर ।
बोलेउ मुनि पद नाइ सिरु गदगद गिरा गभीर ॥ २१५ ॥

dōhā.

prēma magana manu jāni nrpu kari bibēku dhari dhīra.
bōlē'u muni pada nā'i siru gadagada girā gabhīra. 215.

When the king realised that his Mana (mind and heart) have become overwhelmed with surging waves of love and affections, he used his wisdom and prudence to regain his poise and recover his senses.

He bowed at the feet of the sage (Vishwamitra), and, recollecting himself, said the following words in a voice soaked in emotions and with a throat that was choked. (Doha no. 215)

[Note—Janak was not a child. For some moments he was overcome with spiritual bliss and emotions. But soon he recovered his poise as he remembered that so many things have to be done and this is not the right time to enter into trance like state of ecstasy. He became practical, and waking up from his dream-like state of ecstasy and bliss, he gathered himself to speak to sage Vishwamitra.

The following verses narrate what Janak told Vishwamitra, and what the sage replied.]

चौ०. कहहु नाथ सुंदर दोउ बालक । मुनिकुल तिलक कि नृप कुल पालक ॥१॥
ब्रह्म जो निगम नेति कहि गावा । उभय बेष धरि की सोइ आवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu nātha sundara dō'u bālaka. munikula tilaka ki nrpa kula pālaka. 1.
brahma jō nigama nēti kahi gāvā. ubhaya bēṣa dhari kī sō'i āvā. 2.

King Janak asked sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh Lord, tell me who these two charming, pretty boys are. Are they the exalted sons of some sage’s family, or are they the princes of some great king?’¹ (1)

Or is it that Brahm, the Supreme Being whom the Vedas describe as being ‘Neti-Neti’ (not that; not this)², have himself taken two physical forms (as these two princes)³? (2)

[Note—¹ Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/64—1/65 also.

The king had observed that sage Vishwamitra had lovingly called and seated the two brothers close to him. Refer Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215. So he thought that they may be the sons of some great sage.

But then he changed his view because the two boys had the appearance of princes—they had bows and arrows in their hands, and a quiver tied to the waist. Their general demeanours were like dignified princes of some noble dynasty. So he asked the sage whether they belonged to some kingly family.

²But again he thought the matter over and changed his view. The way his heart and mind felt instant ecstasy when he saw them made him sure that they can’t be ordinary human beings. Remember: Janak was not an ordinary king; he was exceptionally wise and highly enlightened. So it was not possible that his mind and heart would jump with joy as they did for ordinary mortals. The king deduced that the Atma residing in the body of these two princes was very powerful, strong enough to attract his own Atma. For a self-realised and enlightened man, this is only possible if he comes in contact with a superior Being. So the king deduced that in all probability, these two boys were personified forms of Brahm.

The word ‘Neti’ is used universally by the scriptures to describe Brahm. The word means ‘not this not that’. In other words, the scriptures try their best to explain who or what this mysterious cosmic entity known as ‘Brahm’ is by giving examples and citing instances from the visible world as well as the subtle world beyond vision. But all their attempts to fully describe Brahm fail miserably.

To understand this phenomenon we can take a well-known example. A blind man wants to learn what an elephant looks like. He touches the elephant's leg and then its tail and then its trunk. To him, all feel alike. He asks another man who can see if what he touches is the 'elephant'. The answer is yes and no. Similarly, since everything that exists is a manifestation of Brahm, it represents a minute fraction of the cosmic form of Brahm. But the knowledge of this fractional entity of Brahm does not mean that the person who is acquainted with it is also acquainted with Brahm in its entirety, in its vast, all-encompassing cosmic form. That is why the scriptures ultimately declare that whatever they have said about the Supreme Being does not describe him in entirety. In other words, Brahm is what is visible, understandable and perceptible, as well as that which is invisible, that which is incomprehensible, and that which is imperceptible. It is therefore neither this nor that; it cannot be confined to some criterion and measurable unit. Brahm is present as the life-force in a single-celled organism as he is present in the huge elephant and the most complex of animals, the human race. He is revealed as a stone as much as in the form of air, water, sky and fire.

The existence of Brahm is said to be at two levels: one that is macrocosmic, and the other that is microcosmic. Brahm is invisible like air, as well as visible in the form of the visible world. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness, that is a subtle entity that uniformly pervades throughout this creation, and at the same time it is also known as the individual creature with an independent Atma which is also pure consciousness that resides in his physical gross body. This simply means that Brahm has a dual existence.

This is what Janak means here. He wonders if the supreme Atma known as Parmatma or Brahm has revealed himself in the body of these two princes. There is an interesting interpretation here. If it is true that Brahm has indeed revealed himself in a physical form, Janak's words assume special meaning: if that is the case, then Lord Ram represents Brahm and Laxman represents his image, like the case of the creature being an image of the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of Brahm.

An image is a virtual reflection of the principal object; it is like the case of an object's reflection in a mirror. The reflection follows the principal object; if the latter moves then the image or the reflection also moves. This is absolutely true and applicable with Laxman vis-à-vis Lord Ram. Laxman is like the shadow of Lord Ram; he never leaves the Lord even for a moment. Even when Lord Ram had to go to the forest to kill the demons, Laxman followed him like his shadow.

³Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Laxman represents Prakriti, Nature. 'Brahm, who is the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness, is an invisible entity, but 'Prakriti' or Nature is the visible aspect of this Brahm. Both these two entities—Brahm and Prakriti—are infinite and beyond the limited viewing field of a creature's gross body consisting of the organ of perceiving the sights of the world that is known as the eye, as well as his subtle organ known as the mind and intellect that can see and understand things not seen and perceived by any of the physical organs of the body besides the eye.

So Janak means that his wisdom tells him that in all probability the same Brahm and Prakriti have manifested themselves in the body of Lord Ram and Laxman.]

सहज बिरागरूप मनु मोरा । थकित होत जिमि चंद चकोरा ॥ ३ ॥

ताते प्रभु पूछउँ सतिभाऊ । कहहु नाथ जनि करहु दुराऊ ॥ ४ ॥

इन्हहि बिलोकत अति अनुरागा । बरबस ब्रह्मसुखहि मन त्यागा ॥ ५ ॥

sahaja birāgarūpa manu mōrā. thakita hōta jimi canda cakōrā. 3.
tātē prabhu pūcha'um̐ satibhā'ū. kahahu nātha jani karahu durā'ū. 4.
inhahi bilōkata ati anurāgā. barabasa brahmasukhahi mana tyāgā. 5.

[Janak continued—] ‘My mind and heart (Mana) are completely dispassionate towards and detached from this world, but suddenly I find them so extremely enchanted and captivated by them (Ram and Laxman) as if the Chakor bird is watching the full moon. [Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge] is so enamoured of the moon that it fixes its sight on the latter when it rises in the east, and turns its head to maintain its gaze on the moon till it sets in the west. Janak means that like this bird, he is also unable to move his attention away from Lord Ram and Laxman.] (3)

That is why, oh Lord, I am asking you this question. Please be kind to enlighten me, and do not conceal anything from me. (4)

I have developed immense affection for them as soon as I saw them. Their divine vision has forced my mind and heart to leave the bliss that they obtain by remaining submerged in the thoughts of Brahm (by meditating and remaining in a perpetual state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of blissful existence), and instead focus their attention on them. [This is quite uncharacteristic for me. This has made me perplexed as to why it has come to happen at all. This is the reason why I am asking you to tell me truthfully who these two boys are.] (5)

[Note—King Janak effectively told sage Vishwamitra that—“Oh sage, I remain submerged in a virtual state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of existence when a person goes about his normal duties in this physical world but remains engrossed in meditating upon his ‘self’, the pure conscious Atma. Hence, it is not easily that I am disturbed. But I am astonished that in the case of these two brothers, once I looked at them I feel that I have been rewarded for my meditation. This can only happen when my Atma witnesses the presence of the Parmatma, the supreme Atma. This is why I am confused and want to know from you who they are.”

Being self-realised and spiritually enlightened, it is not possible for Janak to be enchanted by anything pertaining to this mortal world. The very fact that it did happen, the very fact that his mind and heart have become so enchanted by the sight of Ram and Laxman, is a sufficient proof that these two princes are not ordinary humans. They are sure to be divine Spirit in a human body.

King Janak was aware that sage Vishwamitra might question his assumption that these two brothers are a personified form of Brahm. So the wise king himself pre-empts this by telling the reason for this assumption of his—he says that he is a dispassionate person who has no attractions for the world, and therefore he is not charmed by the physical features of the two brothers. There must certainly be some hidden cause that has attracted him mind and heart to them.]

कह मुनि बिहसि कहेहु नृप नीका । बचन तुझार न होइ अलीका ॥ ६ ॥

kaha muni bihasi kahēhu nr̥pa nīkā. bacana tumhāra na hō'i alīkā. 6.

The sage smiled politely and replied to the king—‘Oh king! What you have said cannot be wrong (because you are wise and enlightened). You have said the correct thing. (6)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/66-1/67 also.

This is a remarkable reply of the sage. In a single sentence he has endorsed what the wise king had said about Ram—that is, Lord Ram is sure to be a visible manifestation of Brahm, and Laxman is another form of Brahm. This subtly endorses the theory of ‘duality’ that Janak was referring to. That is, the sage agreed that the formless supreme Brahm has indeed come down to reveal himself in a physical form.

At the same time the sage remained silent about openly endorsing that Lord Ram was indeed Brahm personified. It was essential to keep the true identity of Lord Ram a secret because the main purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth was to kill the cruel and sinful demons, and if his true identity was revealed then the whole planning would go for a toss. The demons would run away and hide somewhere, or they would come and surrender before the Lord, bidding for their time when Lord Ram would wind up his earthly sojourn and ascend to the heaven when they would once again surface with renewed vigour and resume their tyranny.

Besides this, the Lord had to perform many acts as an ordinary human to set an example for other human beings to follow in their daily lives. The Lord had planned to act as a living example of the principles of Dharma (laws of auspicious living, laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality) so that other people could emulate him in their own lives when they faced similar situation. Indeed, the entire story of the Ramayan is pregnant with instances of Dharma being practiced in daily life, as well as of the different opposing situations that confront a man in this world and leave him confused as to what is right and what is wrong. In such vexing circumstances, the life and times of Lord Ram stand him in good stead and act like a lighthouse for the boat trapped in the choppy ocean of the world.

This noble objective would have been defeated if the Lord’s cosmic supreme form had been revealed. It is left for the future generation to bask in the divinity and sublimity of the Lord’s glory just like the case of Lord Jesus Christ whose divinity was known only to a selected few while he was alive, but his glory, his fame and his message became immortal after his physical death on the cross.

The sage hinted to the wise king that after having known who Lord Ram truly is, he too must keep quiet and retain this revelation within his heart, without disclosing it to anyone else. The king got this hint, because all future events show that he acted normally and treated Ram and Laxman like normal princes.]

ए प्रिय सबहि जहाँ लगि प्रानी । मन मुसुकाहिं रामु सुनि बानी ॥ ७ ॥

ē priya sabahi jahām̐ lagi prānī. mana musukāhiṁ rāmu suni bānī. 7.

(The sage continued) ‘They are dear to all the creatures; they are loved by all living beings.’¹

When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled softly to himself.² (7)

[Note—¹This is a marvelous statement of sage Vishwamitra, completely removing Janak’s doubts and firmly endorsing his view that Lord Ram is Brahm personified.

It clearly refers to the ‘Atma’ which is the pure conscious soul and the life-giving entity of any living being. All the scriptures universally say that a creature’s Atma is a fraction of the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. Only those who are self-realised and enlightened know this fact, and this is why they remain submerged in meditating upon this Atma because it gives them the bliss of Brahm-realisation.

The gross body of a living being is of no use either to him or the rest of the world if this body has no ‘life or consciousness’ in it; it would be dead and decay rapidly. Every

single living being loves his own life, called his 'Pran'. This Pran is dear to all. The word 'Pran' however, also means the vital life-sustaining winds that live inside the body of the creature. But one word has many connotations and cannot be restricted to mean only one particular thing. Hence, Pran means life as well as anything which is extremely dear to someone.

Therefore, the 'Atma', the pure consciousness, is also the 'Pran', the dearest thing for any living being, because the body cannot survive without the Atma.

²When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled—for one he hinted to both sage Vishwamitra and to king Janak that it is indeed so, and second, he was embarrassed that he is being praised on his face. When Janak got this stamp of endorsement from the learned sage, his gaze upon Ram became more intense and penetrating. This was one more cause for Lord Ram to smile and subtly acknowledge Janak's respect and love for him.

The Lord subtly told Janak that "Wait, like my father Dasrath all your wisdom will soon vanish in thin air. Soon you will forget who I am, and you will start treating me as a prince and later on as your son-in-law. Wait and watch my maverick Maya cast its net upon your wisdom."]

रघुकुल मनि दसरथ के जाए । मम हित लागि नरेस पठाए ॥ ८ ॥

raghukula mani dasaratha kē jā'ē. mama hita lāgi narēsa paṭhā'ē. 8.

The sage then told king Janak—"These two boys are like gems of king Raghu's dynasty, and are the sons of king Dasrath. The king has sent them for my cause, to help me." (8)

[Note—The sage had previously told Janak that his words can't be wrong. Janak and Vishwamitra were both enlightened souls. So the first thing that mattered to them was the fact that Lord Ram was Brahm personified. In all probability, the sage disclosed this fact to Janak in a confidential tone. This was actually possible because they were sitting close by, and when two chiefs are having some confidential discussion, their attendants are not supposed to poke their ears to listen what is being discussed or said. The attendants stand at a respectable distance and let the two chiefs talk.

So, no one else, either the accompanying sages of Vishwamitra, or the king's ministers, officials and Brahmins who accompanied him in his entourage, knew what answer sage Vishwamitra gave in relation to Janak's question "are these brothers Brahm personified".

This fact settled, they then came to more practical things. Yes, the sage told the king, these two boys were princes belonging to a noble and reputed lineage of kings of the Raghu dynasty.

The first question of the king "are they some great sage's son" is also answered subtly here. Remember: when Dasrath had handed Ram and Laxman to sage Vishwamitra, he had told him that now onwards, the sage is like their father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 above. Hence, for all practical purposes, the sage is the father of Lord Ram and Laxman at present.

This also solves the mystery why the sage had affectionately called the two brothers near him and gave him a seat beside him. The exalted sage is like their 'father' at the moment. And like a loving father, he lovingly seated the two brothers near him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215 above.

Thus we see that all the three things that Janak had said were true—i.e. that Lord Ram and Laxman were like the sons of a great sage Vishwamitra, they were also the sons

of a great king Dasrath, and they were personified forms of the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

दो० रामु लखनु दोउ बंधुबर रूप सील बल धाम ।
मख राखेउ सबु साखि जगु जिते असुर संग्राम ॥ २१६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu lakhanu dō'u bandhubara rūpa sīla bala dhāma.
makha rākhē'u sabu sākhi jagu jītē asura saṅgrāma. 216.

The sage concluded introducing the two brothers to king Janak by saying—‘Their names are Ram and Laxman, and they are brothers. They are like a treasury of politeness and humbleness, as well as of strength and valour.

The whole world is witness to the fact that they have protected my fire sacrifice by dereating and conquering the demons who had been defiling it.’ (Doha no. 216)

[Note—In order to impress upon king Janak that the two brothers are not merely princes of a great kingdom, but they deserve special mention as they have protected his fire sacrifice by killing fierce demons, the sage concluded their introduction with this final comment.

Kings honour warriors; great warriors are respected and honoured everywhere. When a king comes to learn that the person standing in front of him is a renowned warrior of great strength and valour, and he has done certain valorous deeds no one has yet dared to do, he develops special respect for that person. The sage also wanted to hint that this is one of the many reasons why he loves Lord Ram and Laxman so much as if they were like his own sons.

This last statement of introduction by the sage immediately inspired great respect for the two brothers in members of the king’s entourage.

The sage knew very well that the king had organized the bow-breaking ceremony to select a warrior for his daughter Sita. Only someone of exceptional strength and power would be able to lift the bow which was anyhow not an ordinary one but one that belonged to Lord Shiva. Lifting it, stringing it and then breaking it was no child’s play. Janak was in search for a strong prince as groom for his daughter, for otherwise he would have made some other condition. So one purpose of sage Vishwamitra telling Janak about these marvelous feats of Lord Ram (protecting his fire sacrifice and killing the fierce demons) was to make him aware that his search for a brave warrior has ended, though the sage knew that Janak is very steadfast in his vows and would not so easily go back on his own declaration.

But at the same time it must not be forgotten that sage Vishwamitra was said to ‘Trikaalagya’—one who knew about the past, the present and the future. So in effect he was hinting to king Janak that he need not worry if no other prince is able to break the bow and marry Sita according to his vows. His wishes would be fulfilled as Lord Ram is there to step in at the correct time. Unfortunately, king Janak could not decipher this message of the sage as is proved by subsequent developments during the actual bow-breaking ceremony. When no one was able to lift the bow, the king was confounded and heart-broken. He angrily chided all of them and went to the extent of calling them impotent. He had forgotten about this subtle hint of Vishwamitra at that time—that the greatest warrior of the land, Lord Ram, is sitting in their midst and the Lord has not been

given a chance yet before Janak started fretting so much about no one being able to move the bow even by a fraction of a millimeter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.

This goes to confirm the view that Lord Ram smiled at Janak when sage Vishwamitra agreed with him that Lord Ram is indeed the Supreme Being himself in a human form. The Lord's smile was mischievous—he smiled because he knew that soon all this wisdom and realisation would vanish in thin air, and under the influence of his stupendous Maya, the same king who knows that he is the Supreme Being, and who will be told in express terms about his worldly valour of having killed formidable demons, would wail and lament that the earth is devoid of warriors who would lift Shiva's bow! Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216 above.

This is also the primary reason why Laxman became very angry and strongly admonished king Janak in open court when the latter lamented and said that he is dismayed to find that the earth is void of warriors. Laxman was astonished that Janak—who only the previous day when he had come to meet and welcome them at their camp on the outskirts of the city, seemed to be so wise and enlightened that he said that he knows who Lord Ram actually was, and sage Vishwamitra had also endorsed his views, and added to this was the sage's telling him about the fantastic deed of killing the demon army by the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman—should now make such an insinuating remark that the earth is devoid of true warrior. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. मुनि तव चरन देखि कह राऊ । कहि न सकउँ निज पुन्य प्रभाऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

muni tava carana dēkhi kaha rā'ū. kahi na saka'um' nija pun'ya prabhā'ū. 1.

The king (Janak) thanked his good luck and told sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh sage! When I have seen your holy feet I feel so honoured and privileged that I am unable to say what good deeds I had done in my previous life that has rewarded me with this good fortune.’

(1)

[Note—When one does some meritorious deed, reward becomes due to him. Janak thanks his past good deeds that have entitled him to have the rare spiritual reward of having the privilege of meeting not only sage Vishwamitra but also Lord Ram and Laxman whom the king himself recognized as personified forms of the Supreme Being. What more can any living being expect for his meritorious deeds?

Without some auspicious deed no spiritual reward accumulates, and without it it's not possible to meet a saint and holy man. Company of saints, sages and pious men is a harbinger of all good fortunes. It's a sort of a chain reaction—one does good deeds and becomes entitled for rewards, then he meets saints, and their auspicious company acts as a catalyst for more good deeds. This results in exponentially increasing the spiritual rewards that become due to the person.

King Janak also considers himself lucky because he had met a great sage and saint of the stature of Vishwamitra which is not possible without the blessing and the wish of the

Lord God. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7.

It is only when one meets that he is blessed with Bhakti (devotion for Lord God). This is exactly what has happened here. The king has first met sage Vishwamitra and got his profuse blessings, and then only was he able to meet Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer to the sequence of events as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 215.

Communion with saints and sages leads to wisdom, and both of these are not possible without the grace of Lord Ram. Company of saints and sages is the root of all auspiciousness and good fortunes, and it opens the gates for acquisition of many mystical and spiritual achievements. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 3.

Without accumulation of auspicious effects of ritheous and meritorious deeds, it is not possible to meet saints, and without them no delusions regarding this existential world can be eliminated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45.

So it is clear now that king Janak thanks his immense good luck that first he was able to meet the great sage Vishwamitra, and as a result of this auspicious meeting he was able not only to meet Lord Ram and Laxman but was fortunate enough to recognize them as personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 216.

So, in effect, Janak told sage Vishwamitra—“Oh sage, I have had the privilege of seeing your holy feet as a reward of some great good deeds that I have done in the past of which I myself am unaware of. Then, as a result of seeing your holy feet I was further blessed to be able to see the two pretty boys, Lord Ram and Laxman, who my heart says are no one other than Brahm personified. How lucky I am!”]

सुंदर स्याम गौर दोउ भ्राता । आनंदहू के आनंद दाता ॥ २ ॥

इन्ह कै प्रीति परसपर पावनि । कहि न जाइ मन भाव सुहावनि ॥ ३ ॥

सुनुहु नाथ कह मुदित बिदेहू । ब्रह्म जीव इव सहज सनेहू ॥ ४ ॥

sundara syāma gaura dō'u bhrātā. ānamdahū kē ānamda dātā. 2.

inha kai prīti parasapara pāvani. kahi na jā'i mana bhāva suhāvani. 3.

sunahu nātha kaha mudita bidēhū. brahma jīva iva sahaja sanēhū. 4.

‘The sight of these two lovely (pretty) brothers, who are of a dark and fair complexion respectively, immensely add to the intensity of delight and happiness that one has. [This verse can be read as follows as well—“These two beautiful brothers of a dark and fair complexion respectively add glory, depth and immensity to the emotions of delight and happiness that exist anywhere in this world.”]¹ (2)

The mutual love and affection that these two brothers have for each other is indeed exemplary. Their brotherly attitude is extremely pleasant to experience and so remarkable that I (Janak) cannot describe it in words.’ (3)

The king further said very cheerfully, ‘Listen Lord (sage Vishwamitra). Their mutual affection for each other is like what the Jiva has for Brahm.’² (4)

[Note—¹In this line, the virtues of delight and happiness have been personified. Hence it means that if ‘delight’ and ‘happiness’ were persons, then they themselves would be

delighted and happy to see and meet Lord Ram who has a dark complexion, and Laxman who has a fair complexion.

The king has already acknowledged that his Mana (mind and heart) are captivated and enchanted at the sight of the two brothers. So here he reiterates this once again. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 215 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8, as well as Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.

²This is a very remarkable observation of the enlightened king Janak. When Janak realised that Lord Ram was Brahm personified, and when he watched the love between him and Laxman, he became contemplative and pensive. For all this time, Janak had been watching Ram and Laxman very closely. He had observed that the two brothers stayed very close to each other, every now and then glanced at each other and smiled. Laxman's demeanours showed that he was eager to do anything if Lord Ram as much as hinted him with a slight gesture of the eye or hand, even without actually telling him to do it. The affable nature and brotherly attitude of the two brothers was infectious.

While Lord Ram represented Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, Laxman represented the Jiva, the creature, the living being. The Jiva cannot live without the Parmatma because the Jiva's Atma, his soul and very existence, is directly related to the Parmatma, the supreme Atma as it is the latter that lives in a fractional form as the individual Atma of the Jiva.

The Parmatma loves the Jiva just like the father loves his offspring. The Jiva loves the Parmatma as his only means of life and sustenance, as the only one who selflessly cares for him and looks for his welfare in a world surrounded by selfishness and vested interests. It is like the case of the sun and the moon. The moon, the Jiva, derives its glory and shine because of the sun, and the sun gets its importance as a brilliant source of light when it is compared to the moon which also shines but lacks the brilliance of the sun and its energy.

The question 'who is a Jiva' and 'what is the relationship between the Jiva and Brahm' is a subject discussed at length in the Upanishads.

"Who is a Jiva" (a living being) has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Saraswati Upanishad, verse nos. 47-48; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 15; Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 6-7. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2.

The "relation between a Jiva and Brahm/Ishwar/Parmatma" has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 (difference between Jiva and Parmatma); Canto 9, verse no. 10 (difference between Jiva and Prakriti); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 5 (Jiva and Brahm are one). (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53, 70, 73. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2 (subject of Jiva vis-à-vis Brahm).

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 4/9/6 describes this concept of a "Jiva being a reflection of the Supreme Brahm" as follows—'My salutations to the Supreme Being who is almighty and all-powerful. The Lord has entered my heart, enlivens my vital Pran (breath), my limbs and my sense organs, and also empowers my faculty of speech—all of which would otherwise have remained dormant and ineffective.'

पुनि पुनि प्रभुहि चितव नरनाहू । पुलक गात उर अधिक उछाहू ॥ ५ ॥

puni puni prabhuhi citava naranāhū. pulaka gāta ura adhika uchāhū. 5.

The king was completely held enthralled by the sight of Lord Ram and Laxman. He could not move his eyes away from Lord Ram, and glanced at him repeatedly. All the while his body was thrilled, and his heart overflowed with emotions and was ecstatic. (5)

[Note—The condition of Janak was like a Jiva, a living being, who has found the objective of all his spiritual pursuit. Janak has already accepted that it is not easy to captivate his mind as he is a dispassionate person who has no attractions for the charms of the material, physical world. But in the case of Lord Ram he does not understand why he is unable to control himself, he wonders, and says this to sage Vishwamitra clearly. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

In reply the sage told him that his suspicion that Lord Ram is Brahm personified is indeed true. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 216.

So it was confirmed now that Janak's mind and heart was captivated not by the physical beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman but because they were personified forms of Brahm. If this is the case it is natural for Janak to keep glancing at Lord Ram repeatedly because he is getting the reward of his lifetime of spiritual practices and metaphysical discussions.

The more he sees Lord Ram, the more intense his devotion and love for the Supreme Being sitting right in his front becomes. The fire of devotion and love for the Lord is kindled with renewed intensity each time the king glances at Lord Ram and tries to force his eyes and mind away from him.

But this could not continue indefinitely—because a big ceremony was to be held the next day, invited kings and princes were coming in in a steady stream, and a lot of administrative nitty-gritties had to be taken care of. So, the king finally brought himself together and extricated his mind from the spiritual reverie it was submerged in till now.

The king therefore sighed and got up to take his leave from the sage. Now, let us read what happened next.]

मुनिहि प्रसंसि नाइ पद सीसू । चलेउ लवाइ नगर अवनीसू ॥ ६ ॥

सुंदर सदनु सुखद सब काला । तहाँ बासु लै दीन्ह भुआला ॥ ७ ॥

करि पूजा सब बिधि सेवकाई । गयउ राउ गृह बिदा कराई ॥ ८ ॥

munihi prasansi nā'i pada sīsū. calē'u lavā'i nagara avanīsū. 6.

sundara sadanu sukhada saba kālā. tahām' bāsu lai dīnha bhu'ālā. 7.

kari pūjā saba bidhi sēvakā'ī. gaya'u rā'u gr̥ha bidā karā'ī. 8.

The king praised the sage and knelt down to touch his feet with his head. Then he escorted the sage (and of course Lord Ram and Laxman with him) to the city. (6)

There, in the city, the king lodged him at a place that was comfortable at all times. (7)

After paying his obeisance to the sage and arranging for his service in all possible way, the king took his leave (permission) and went back to his palace. (8)

[Note—We have already seen that sage Vishwamitra was not alone. For one, he was accompanied by Lord Ram and Laxman, and second, a lot many other sages and holy

men had also come with them. So obviously the king took the entire group to give them a comfortable and suitable lodging place in the city, close to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony.

At the time of taking his leave, the king once again worshipped the sage and appointed attendants to look after the needs of the sage as well as other members of his group.]

दो०. रिषय संग रघुबंस मनि करि भोजनु बिश्रामु ।
बैठे प्रभु भ्राता सहित दिवसु रहा भरि जामु ॥ २१७ ॥

dōhā.

riṣaya saṅga raghubansa mani kari bhōjanu biśrāmu.
bait̥hē prabhu bhrātā sahita divasu rahā bhari jāmu. 217.

Lord Ram, who was like a gem in the dynasty of king Raghu, ate his meals together with the accompanying sages (and of course with Laxman), and then took some rest.

After that, the Lord (Ram) sat down with his brother (Laxman) during the late afternoon hours when a quarter of the day was still left. (Doha no. 217)

[Note—This means clearly that the king had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra in the early hours of the day, brought him in the city before noon so that the sage and other members of his group could take their lunch and rest, and then Lord Ram and Laxman sat down together around 4 O'clock in the late afternoon hours.

This also means that the two brothers wanted to have some private time together to talk with each other, away from the sages. By all indications which will be clear from the very next line that follows below, Laxman had quietly told Lord Ram that he wanted to have some thing to request him, so will he please come aside. Laxman wanted to see the sights of the city, which we will read now.

Obviously therefore, the two brothers had gone sight-seeing in the city during the early evening hours when the sun was in the west and the atmosphere was cool and pleasant.]

चौ०. लखन हृदयँ लालसा बिसेषी । जाइ जनकपुर आइअ देखी ॥ १ ॥
प्रभु भय बहुरि मुनिहि सकुचाहीं । प्रगट न कहहिं मनहिं मुसुकाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

lakhana hṛdayam̐ lālasā bisēṣī. jā'i janakapura ā'i'a dēkhī. 1.
prabhu bhaya bahuri munihi sakucāhīm. pragaṭa na kahahīm manahīm
musukāhīm. 2.

Laxman had a great desire to go and see the city and its sights. (1)

But he was afraid of Lord Ram and hesitated to speak before the sage for the fear of annoying them. [That is why he quietly took the Lord away from the place where they were resting with the other sages.]

Laxman could not gather enough courage to express his desire to Lord Ram openly, so smiled shyly (to indicate that he wants something but is hesitant to speak) (2)

[Note—We have already read the description of the wonderful city earlier from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214, and have also analysed how Lord Ram and Laxman had seen the beauty of the suburban areas but have only heard about the fabulous city's inner majesty. So it was natural that Laxman wanted to see it.

But he was too shy to tell his elder brother Ram because he was afraid that the latter would get annoyed at his childishness. They had just arrived in the city, and were in the group of great sages. It would not be dignified for them to wander alone, unguided and unescorted, in the city like ordinary tourists.

Remember: King Janak had not assigned anyone to take them around the city, and being princes of a great kingdom it would be under their dignity to roam around like laymen. Laxman thought that this might annoy the sage also. The sage had never let them alone ever since they accompanied him from Ayodhya, and so he might not approve of the idea of the two brothers roaming alone in an alien city. What if something goes wrong and they are either lost or hurt?

This was the reason why Laxman was hesitant to speak of his desire before the sage. So he took his elder brother aside and hinted to him that he wants to see the city. They won't have another chance tomorrow because the bow-breaking ceremony is to be held on that day, and in all probability it will last the entire day. On the following day it will be time to leave. Even if they stayed for one more day at the request of Janak, it would be highly shameful and undignified for them to go around the city when some other warrior had won the bow-breaking competition and all attention in the city would be focused on him. They would be completely neglected.

Therefore, the only time slot that was available for the sight-seeing was now, thought Laxman.

Another reason for Laxman's hesitation was that Lord Ram may admonish him for his childishness because the sages would gather in the evening hours to have religious discourses or discussions, and to go to enjoy the city sights while neglecting this attendance might anger sage Vishwamitra.

There are numerous instances where Laxman has maintained great respect for his elder brother by not speaking without his permission. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 252; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 276.]

राम अनुज मन की गति जानी । भगत बछलता हियँ हुलसानी ॥ ३ ॥

rāma anuja mana kī gati jānī. bhagata bachalatā hiyaṁ hulasānī. 3.

Lord Ram understood what was in the mind of Laxman. Love for his devotee was inherent to the character of the Lord who could understand their inner feelings (because the Lord is the Parmatma, the cosmic Consciousness that lives in the heart of all living beings as their own Atma, and as such the subtle and sublime form of the Lord knew all that the Jiva thought and felt; nothing is hidden from him).

Therefore, the Lord immediately realised what Laxman was thinking (even without his expressing his desires in clear terms) (30)

[Note—It's a wonderful verse of immense spiritual import. Laxman had merely smiled and the Lord knew what he wants. Earlier we have read that Lord Ram is the Supreme

Being, the Parmatma, and Laxman represents the Jiva, the living being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 217.

The Parmatma definitely knows what the Jiva wants because the former lives in the inner-self of the latter in the form of his Atma. We have a great message here—it is that the Lord knows about the inner feelings of his devotees, the Lord knows what goes inside their mind and what they think. Therefore, it is not possible to cheat on the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 314, and line no. 1 of Doha no. 256 where Bharat has told the Lord that he knows what is in the heart of all living beings. This is also asserted in Vinai Patrika of Tulsidas, verse no. 107, line no. 2 of stanza no. 5 which says “He (Lord Ram) is the Lord of all, lives in the inner-self of all living beings, and knows the inner-feeling of all”.

Besides this, another important point is that a true devotee need not tell the Lord that he needs this or that. Does he not realise that the Lord knows about his wants? Another important message is this—prayers come from within the heart, they do not require words to be understood by the Lord; prayer is not something to be chanting like a parrot from some printed texts of some book!

So, Lord Ram could immediately realise what was going on in the mind of Laxman without his saying anything.]

परम बिनीत सकुचि मुसुकाई । बोले गुर अनुसासन पाई ॥ ४ ॥
नाथ लखनु पुरु देखन चहहीं । प्रभु सकोच डर प्रगट न कहहीं ॥ ५ ॥
जौं राउर आयसु मैं पावौं । नगर देखाइ तुरत लै आवौं ॥ ६ ॥

parama binīta sakuci musukā'ī. bōlē gura anusāsana pā'ī. 4.
nātha lakhanu puru dēkhana cahahīm. prabhu sakōca ḍara pragaṭa na kahahīm.
5.
jaur̥m rā'ura āyasu mair̥m pāvaur̥m. nagara dēkhā'i turata lai āvaur̥m. 6.

Lord Ram approached sage Vishwamitra very politely, and smiled hesitantly. The wise sage realised that he wants to say something, so he gave his permission. Then upon receiving the Guru's permission¹, the Lord said—(4)

‘Oh Lord. Laxman wishes to see the city. He does not express this clearly as he is hesitant because it might annoy you. [So, Laxman has approached me to intercede on his behalf.] (5)

If I get your permission, then I will go with him, take him around quickly, and then come back soon.’² (6)

[Note—¹It is to be noted that sage Vishwamitra has been called a ‘Guru’, a teacher. It is apt to address him with this title because he had earlier taught the two brothers many things, including the art and science of warfare and weapons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 7.

The Lord has approached the sage very politely because he has great respect for him and also because he had to take permission from him to go and see the city. If one asks for some favour politely, there are better chances of it being accepted.

The Lord smiled, indicating to the sage that he wants to say something. The Lord waited for the sage's permission before speaking. This gives us a message how to treat elders and seniors. One should be polite and smiling when one approaches them, and not speak out of turn.

²This entire episode of Laxman silently smiling, Lord Ram understanding what he wants, and then the Lord approaching sage Vishwamitra on Laxman's behalf to seek his permission to go and see the city has great implication and conveys a great message.

It implies that a true devotee totally depends upon his chosen deity for all his spiritual and worldly needs. He does not go from door to door to beg or plead with others to help him or fulfill his needs. He leaves all things upon his Lord. When the Lord finds that this devotee is completely dependent upon him, the Lord takes proper care of him, and acts as his representative, advocate and council. This frees the devotee of so much hassle and problems, as well as embarrassments.

We see that in Ram Charit Manas, as opposed to other versions of the story of Lord Ram that is universally known as the "Ramayana", countless spiritual messages are subtly weaved into its fabric, only to be unraveled and understood in the correct light.

A very interesting development has occurred here. While Lord Ram could understand the meaning of the 'smile' of Laxman, sage Vishwamitra, though he was so wise and enlightened, on the other hand could not understand the meaning of the 'smile' of Lord Ram. The sage had to be told in specific terms by the Lord what he wants to say.

This incident points out the difference between the Parmatma and the Jiva. While the Parmatma knows what the living being wants, the living being is unable to know what the Parmatma wants. The meaning of the smile of Laxman was understood by Lord Ram, but the sage, being a Jiva no matter how exalted and enlightened he may have been, could not understand the meaning of the smile on Lord Ram's face.

If we recall, Lord Ram had smiled earlier when king Janak was talking with sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216. There that smile had a different meaning as discussed in the note appended to that verse.]

सुनि मुनीसु कह बचन सप्रीती । कस न राम तुह राखहु नीती ॥ ७ ॥
धरम सेतु पालक तुह ताता । प्रेम बिबस सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ८ ॥

sunī munīsu kaha bacana saprītī. kasa na rāma tumha rākhahu nītī. 7.
dharama sētu pālaka tumha tātā. prēma bibasa sēvaka sukhadātā. 8.

When the sage heard the Lord's request, he replied most affectionately—"Oh Ram, it is no wonder that you obey the laws of good manners. (7)

You are the protector of the bridge of Dharma. [That is, Lord Ram always upholds righteousness, proper conduct, propriety, morality and ethics. He always acts in the proper way, never violating codes set for good manners and etiquette. The sage refers to Lord Ram politely seeking his permission to go and see the city with Laxman.]

You become influenced by love and devotion, and you give joy and happiness to your devotees.², (8)

[Note—Lord Ram has always ensured that all his actions and words are in accordance to the laws of Dharma. While giving a discourse to the citizens of Ayodhya after his coronation, he has told them that if they find him saying anything that is violative of the laws of Dharma then they should fearlessly point it out to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43.

There are many other instances where it is stressed that Lord Ram was an expert in the laws of Dharma. Some of the references in Ram Charit Manas are the following: (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai

line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323.

²Lord Ram respects no other relations except love and devotion. It is the only way to influence the Lord. And the Lord is ever eager to honour the wishes of his devotees. Those who are completely devoted to the Lord and know no one else except the him, the Lord always protects them and honours their wish. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram tells this fact to Sabari, (iii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43 where it is reiterated to sage Narad, and (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-9 that precede Doha no. 86, as well as Doha no. 87 Ka, where Lord Ram tells the crow sage Kaagbhusund the same thing.]

दो०. जाइ देखि आवहु नगरु सुख निधान दोउ भाइ ।
करहु सुफल सब के नयन सुंदर बदन देखाइ ॥ २१८ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i dēkhi āvahu nagaru sukha nidhāna dō'u bhā'i.
karahu suphala saba kē nayana sundara badana dēkhā'i. 218.

The sage gave them his clear permission by saying—‘You two brothers are like an abode of bliss, comfort, happiness and joy. Go to the city and come back soon after seeing it.

Bless all the citizens of the city by giving them an opportunity to enjoy their faculty of sight by showing them your charming countenance and enchanting form.’ (Doha no. 218)

[Note—The sage understood that the two brothers want to go to the city to enable its citizens to derive immense pleasure by beholding their divine form. Going there for sight-seeing was merely an excuse for this. The wise sage thought to himself that he has no moral right to obstruct the Lord in this divine mission. Every single Jiva had an equal right to have a divine glimpse of the Supreme Being in a visible form living in their midst, and the sage should not come in the way.

Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was aware of who Lord Ram was; that he was Brahm personified. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 209; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3, and 7 that precede Doha no. 216.

Lord Ram and Laxman are personified forms of bliss and happiness; by seeing them one gets the bliss of Brahm-realisation. Refer King Janak’s declaration in this respect in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 216.

The sight of the Lord purifies the eyes and makes the person who behold them feel very privileged as if he has got the reward of all his auspicious and meritorious deeds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10 in relation with sage Sutikshan; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 26 in relation with Marich; and (iii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 42 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 in relations with Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king.

This fact has been reiterated again in the very next line that we shall be reading now.]

चौ०. मुनि पद कमल बंदि दोउ भ्राता । चले लोक लोचन सुख दाता ॥ १ ॥

caupāṛī.

muni pada kamala bandi dō'u bhrātā. calē lōka lōcana sukha dātā. 1.

Paying their obeisance to the lotus-like feet of the sage (i.e. after touching the holy feet of sage Vishwamitra to show their thanks to him for granting his permission), the two brothers who provide joy and bliss to the eyes of the world (i.e. all those who see them), went to visit the city for sightseeing. (1)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman observed the principles of etiquette by touching the feet of their guardian and Guru, sage Vishwamitra, and thanking him for giving them permission to go and see the sights of the city. We will see that when they come back they again touch his feet to say that they have come back.

The sage had commented (in Doha no. 218) that they should go to please the eyes of the citizens of the city. So they moved out to fulfill his wishes or obey his orders.]

बालक बृंद देखि अति सोभा । लगे संग लोचन मनु लोभा ॥ २ ॥

bālaka bṛnda dēkhi ati sōbhā. lagē saṅga lōcana manu lōbhā. 2.

In the city, big groups of children of all ages were attracted by their (Lord Ram and Laxman's) beauty and charm. So, these children rushed towards them (Lord Ram and Laxman) to join them, following them and talking animatedly with them. The mind and the heart (Mana) of these groups of children were captivated by the two brothers. (2)

[Note—It is natural for young children to get attracted by anything charming and unusual. They would leave their studies, rush out of their homes, and even abandon their plays if they happen to glance at some unusual spectacle that is interesting. So, when groups of children in the city of Janakpur saw that two lovely dignified princes of approximate their own age and dressed in fine royal liverie were walking down the streets majestically, they were awed. The charm of the two brothers was so magnetic that their naturally pulled the children towards them.

Remember: The city was thronged by other dignitaries; great princes had come to attend the bow ceremony, and in all probability the city was chock-a-block with them and their attendants and guards. The same children of the city watched them from a distance, gawking at them and marveling at the spectacular sight of so many different kinds of people from so many far-off places, representing so many societies and cultures of the sort they had never seen or heard of in their lifetimes. They were in awe of these visiting kings and princes, but did not dare go close to them as they were put off by their royal demeanours and over-jealous attendants who would behave as if their masters were the greatest majesties on earth, with each retinue trying to outdo the other.

Against this background, these city children saw two pretty princes walking normally like ordinary boys of their age, without any sort of 'airs' about them, but who stood out in the crowd by their excellent dignity and superb charm, like the ones the citizens had never heard of or seen ever before. These two princes were alone; they were pleasantly smiling at each other and at anyone with whom they made eye contact. There was no air of haughtiness or pride with them. They appeared very friendly and welcoming. So the children of the city rushed towards Lord Ram and Laxman when they saw them walking down the streets of Janakpur.

Instead of acting with indifference or pretentiously that they are someone special and therefore want to maintain a distance with the laity, not wanting to mix with ordinary people because they were ‘princes’ and shooing the city children away, the two brothers cheerfully welcomed these children, smiled at them, perhaps held the hands of some in a playful manner, asking them their names and where they lived, and in general making small talk with these children like they themselves were ordinary boys like them.

Thus, Lord Ram and Laxman immediately established a rapport with the children of the city. Other children who were initially reluctant to come near and watched them from a distance like other guests too overcame their hesitation when they saw that their friends were cheerfully talking with these two guest princes and all of them were enjoying each other’s company.

So as the Lord progressed on his sight-seeing tour of the city, by and by a huge crowd of excited children gathered around him and followed the two brothers everywhere. When Lord Ram and Laxman had moved out of their lodging place they were alone, with no escorts, but by the time they reached the city center it appeared that a huge army of local ‘escorts’ of giggling and electrified children had surrounded them. These boy ‘escorts’ took the two brothers around the city, pointing out the landmarks to them and showing them the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony. After the tour of the city was completed, Lord Ram saw that it was getting too late and that they must now return to their lodging place. So he politely took his leave from the children accompanying him and Laxman by sweetly thanking them, and then returned to where they were lodged with sage Vishwamitra. This is not a mere conjecture; it is exactly what is said in the text of the Ram Charit Manas itself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 220; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 224—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 225.]

पीत बसन परिकर कटि भाथा । चारु चाप सर सोहत हाथा ॥ ३ ॥

तन अनुहरत सुचंदन खोरी । स्यामल गौर मनोहर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

pīta basana parikara kaṭi bhāthā. cāru cāpa sara sōhata hāthā. 3.
tana anuharata sucandana khōrī. syāmala gaura manōhara jōrī. 4.

[Verse/Chaupai line nos. 3-8 describe the beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman’s form when they went out for sight-seeing in the city of Janakpur. Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/62, stanza nos. 1-2; verse no. 1/63, stanza nos. 2-3; verse no. 1/64, stanza no. 1; verse no. 1/62, stanza nos. 1-2.]

They (Ram and Laxman) wore a yellow silk cloth, known as the ‘Pitambar’, around their waists, with quiver also tied around it (and over the Pitambar). They held a beautiful bow and a matching arrow each in their hands. (3)

To match the beauty and countenance of their forms, which were of a dark and fair hue respectively, they had the paste of sandalwood smeared (rubbed) all over their bodies in a fine shade. This sandalwood was also applied on their forehead in the form of a thin coating of its paste. (4)

[Note—The children and other citizens of the city were spell-bound by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman walking down the streets. Now, we read what they looked like in Chaupai line nos. 3-8. The two brothers presented a fabulous sight that was not merely

beautiful but had a heavenly divine aura about it. This sight not only charmed the city children but the entire population, men and women alike. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.

In ancient times, and in traditional homes even today, noble men wear a silk cloth around their waist that covers the lower part of the body. It is the attire of Lord Vishnu, and all Vaishnavites follow this tradition.

The quiver was tied with a string around the waist.

This attire of the Lord has been referred to repeatedly in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 209; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 233; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 244; (iv) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 316; (v) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 7 that precede Doha no. 327; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

केहरि कंधर बाहु बिसाला । उर अति रुचिर नागमनि माला ॥ ५ ॥

सुभग सोन सरसीरुह लोचन । बदन मयंक तापत्रय मोचन ॥ ६ ॥

kēhari kandhara bāhu bisālā. ura ati rucira nāgamani mālā. 5.

subhaga sōna sarasīruha lōcana. badana mayaṅka tāpatraya mōcana. 6.

*Their shoulders were like that of a lion (i.e. muscular, well-formed, powerful and strong). Their arms were long and well-built¹. Equisite garlands of ‘Naag-mani²’ adorned their chests. (5)

Their eyes were bewitchingly beautiful like the red (pink) lotus flower. Their faces were like the full moon, and they removed all sorts of torments arising from the three types of existential fears³. (5)

[Note—*It is an usual practice with all of Tulsidas’ books, including Ram Charit Manas, that he concentrates his attention on his revered Lord Sri Ram, and though at many a times he refers to Laxman as well, as is clear from Chaupai line no. 4 immediately above where he clearly refers to the two brothers by citing their complexions which are dark and fair for Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, he switches to focusing his attention to Lord Ram in this as well as the following verses.

However, I have preferred to use the pleural number and pleural pronouns such as the word “their” to mean both Lord Ram and Laxman, instead of the singular number and singular pronoun “he” to mean only Lord Ram, to imply that Tulsidas’ real intention was to describe the fabulous divine beauty of *both* the brothers, and not only of Lord Ram. This is absolutely clear just after a few lines in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220 where Tulsidas says that the citizens of the city of Janakup found immense happiness and bliss by watching the ‘two brothers’—and *not only* Lord Ram.

By neglecting Laxman it would sound insulting for him, and we must remember this—that the Lord loves his devotees more than he loves himself. Brahma, the creator, had told this in clear terms to Indra, the king of Gods, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 218. He said—“Listen Indra. Lord Ram does not get angry if someone insults him or offends him, but the Lord never tolerates such treatment to his devotees. Should anyone offend any of his devotees, the offender is burnt by the wrath of Lord Ram. This is well known fact in this world; it is well established in the Itihaas and Purans; it is well known to sage Durbasa.”

The Lord has clearly stated this fact that the only relation he gives importance to and respects is that of ‘Bhakti’ or devotion, love and submission for him for which Laxman is

an exemplary example. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram tells Sabari exactly this thing.

Laxman's unflinching and single-minded devotion for Lord Ram is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 71—to Doha no. 72.

Hence, I have used the pleural number "their" to include both Lord Ram and Laxman while describing their beauteous physical form.

¹Their arms were long, robust, muscular and well-built like an elephant's trunk. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chand stanza no. 2, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 12; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77.

The same thing is reiterated in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 1, verse no. 9—but here it refers only to Lord Ram.

The strength of Lord Ram's arms is as immeasurable as the vast ocean. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 260.

Refer also to Tulsidas' following books in this context—(i) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 13-14; (ii) Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 115; and (iii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138.

An elephant's trunk is the most powerful part of its body. The elephant uses its trunk to uproot huge trees and fling its enemies by wrapping it around them and then throwing them away like a football. The spiritual significance of this allusion is that the devotee need not worry about his well-being as the Lord is always there to extend his helping hand to him. And the Lord's hand is not weak; it is the best 'arm' a person can hope to find in this world which would give him a rock-solid support at all times.

²The 'Naag-mani' is a secretion from the hood of a special category of serpents that forms a lumniscient sac. It is of a shape and size of a piece of pearl. Its rarity makes it priceless, more costly than actual pearl. The word 'Naag' means a snake; and 'Mani' means a gem.

³The three torments that create misery for all living beings are called 'Trai-taap'. They have been outlined in (i) Rig Veda's Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 2; and (ii) Atharva Veda's Sharva Upanishad, verse no. 17.

The *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 2 expressly enumerates them as follows—The 3 'Traitaps' mentioned above are the following— (i) Adhyatmic, (ii) Adhibhautic and (iii) Adhidaivic. The word 'Trividhum' (त्रिविधम्) also refers to the distinction between the three independent entities— (a) The doer, the act and the action, (b) Gyan (knowledge), the one who knows and the object of that knowledge, and (c) the sufferer or enjoyer, the suffering or enjoyment and the object which causes the suffering or is the source of that enjoyment. Though each entity in a particular group appears to be indistinguishable or inseparable from the other, in fact they are quite distinct from each other (2).

[(i) 'Adhyatmic' problems are those that the creature faces in his spiritual pursuits, (ii) 'Adhibhautic' problems are created by terrestrial creatures like enemies, wild animals, cruel kings, thieves, bodily afflictions such as old age and diseases etc., (iii) 'Adhidaivic' are the problems created by unfavourable Gods and malignant stars. (iv) The 'doer' is quite distinct from the 'work to be done' and the 'physical actions of doing that work' though all appear to be interlinked. The doer suffers misery if he gets involved in the actions, but he remains peaceful if he does the deed without any emotional attachment to it or its results. (v) Similarly, 'knowledge' links the 'seeker of knowledge' to the 'object of knowledge'. The seeker remains dissatisfied and agitated only till the time he does not realise his objective of acquiring full knowledge that he and Brahma are one. This knowledge removes all agitations and restlessness, and makes him peaceful and calm. (vi) In the same vein, a person suffers or enjoys only till he is attracted or affected

by any circumstance or any object of the world which is the cause of his sufferings or enjoyments. As soon as he detaches himself from them, there is neither any misery nor any enjoyment for him.]

According to the *Sharva Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 17, the three sufferings also refer to the pains of birth, death and old age.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and like the full moon that soothes the heat caused by the scorching sun, a creature finds bliss and comfort by meditating upon the Lord and remembering his smiling face that silently assures him that he need not worry as the Lord is there to protect him.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63 where Kumbhkaran, the brother of Ravana, feels glad that he would be able to see Lord Ram with a dark complexion whose auspicious vision provides liberation from the three Taaps.]

कानहि कनक फूल छबि देहीं । चितवत चितहि चोरि जनु लेहीं ॥ ७ ॥
चितवनि चारु भृकुटि बर बाँकी । तिलक रेख सोभा जनु चाँकी ॥ ८ ॥

kānanhi kanaka phūla chabi dēhīm. citavata citahi cōri janu lēhīm. 7.
citavani cāru bhr̥kuṭi bara bām̐kī. tilaka rēkha sōbhā janu cām̐kī. 8.

The ears were decorated by golden ear-rings designed like flowers. They were so charming that they immediately stole (captured, snatched away) the attention of the beholder. [In other words, when anyone watches the ear-rings on the Lord's face, his mind gets hooked to them and stops wandering.] (7)

Their glances were bewitching, and the eyebrows were beautifully arched (like the curves of a majestic bow). The lines of the 'Tilak' on their foreheads shined like the glitter of lightening (whenever they moved their heads). (8)

[Note—The 'Tilak Mark' is a sign made by Hindus on their forehead. It consists of three parallel lines, either vertical or horizontal. Usually, followers of Lord Vishnu mark these three lines in a vertical format, while those of Lord Shiva in a horizontal form. These three lines represent the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation. They also stand for the three phases in the life of a creature—the birth, the rest of the life span, and death, as well as the three phases of time—the past, the present, and the future.

The bewitching glances of the Lord: Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 243.

दो०. रुचिर चौतनीं सुभग सिर मेचक कुंचित केस ।
नख सिख सुंदर बंधु दोउ सोभा सकल सुदेस ॥ २१९ ॥

dōhā.

rucira cautanīm subhaga sira mēcaka kuñcita kēsa.
nakha sikha sundara bandhu dō'u sōbhā sakala sudēsa. 219.

The head was adorned by a magnificent rectangular cap which was placed on the lock of curly black hairs.

The beauty and charm of the two brothers are not restricted to any particular part of their bodies, but apply to their entire form—from the head to the toe-nail. Each part has the charm and attractiveness befitting it. (Doha no. 219)

[Note—It ought to be noted that the fabulous divine charm of Lord Ram has been described at various places in Ram Charit Manas. A sampling is as follows: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 233; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 244; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 316; (iv) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 327; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 12; and (vi) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 77.

This is in addition to the present narration in Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

By saying that ‘each part of the body has a charm befitting it’ it is meant that all of them possess respective virtues most suitable to them. For instance, the beauty of the head is highlighted by the curly black lock of hairs and the decorated cap on it; the ears find their beauty with the golden ear-ring moulded to resemble a flower; the eyebrows are majestically curved like the arch of the bow; the arms find their glory if they are muscular and well-built; the chest is adorned with wonderful garlands; and so on and so forth.

Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali” has countless verses describing the fabulous beauty and charm of Lord Ram. Some of the instances are the following:

Geetawali—(i) Baal Kand, verse nos. 52-54, 56, 62-63, 73-77, 82, 108; and (ii) Uttar Kand, verse nos. 2-17.

Besides these, sage Valmiki’s famous epic Ramayana also describes the Lord’s beauteous form in its Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 1, verse nos. 8-12.]

चौ०. देखन नगरु भूपसुत आए । समाचार पुरबासिन्ह पाए ॥ १ ॥

धाए धाम काम सब त्यागी । मनहुँ रंक निधि लूटन लागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhana nagaru bhūpasuta ā'ē. samācāra purabāsinha pā'ē. 1.

dhā'ē dhāma kāma saba tyāgī. manahum'raṅka nidhi lūṭana lāgī. 2.

#When the residents of the city heard that the two princes (‘bhūpasuta’ = sons of a king) have come to see the city [1], they rushed out of their homes, leaving aside whatever they were doing at that moment¹ as if a pauper has been given a free-hand to loot a vast treasury². [2] (1-2)

[Note—#The euphoria and the sense of extreme wonderment that swept through the city of Janakpur was of such an extent that as soon as the word went out that Lord Ram and Laxman are visiting the city, every single individual rushed out to have their glimpse. The excitement was very marked as the citizens had known by then that some very special guests have come whom their king Janak had personally gone to welcome and escort back to the city, and then he had lodged them in his palace that is reserved for state guests. Then the marvelous and fantastic deeds of the two brothers, such as their

eliminating ferocious demoness Tadka and the entire demon army led by their chief commanders Marich and Subahu, and the liberation of Ahilya, had already reached the ears of the citizens. To this news, which in itself was no less wondrous, was added the information about the stupendous beauty and charm of the two princes. So everyone was highly eager and excited to see who these two princes were.

The awe and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman, and the spell they cast on all and sundry, have been beautifully described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/62—1/63.

¹When the city's children poured out of their homes and ran towards Lord Ram and Laxman, some of them ran back home excitedly to their parents to inform them that two wonderful princes have come to visit the city, and they tugged and pulled at their parents to come out and see the spectacle themselves and be convinced of what they had said.

Earlier, when king Janak had gone to welcome sage Vishwamitra on the outskirts of the city, he was accompanied by many noble people of the city besides attendants, guards and others. He brought the sage and the rest of the group, including the two brothers, and lodged them at some palace inside the city. Since they were royal guests, the king must have appointed guards at the door for their security and as a mark of honour.

Meanwhile, all those who had accompanied Janak came back and spread the word inside the city that two princes of excellent charm have come to attend the bow ceremony. Though the citizens would have liked to see these two princes, but the presence of the royal guards at the door of the lodging place must have kept the crowd at bay. So, when the citizens learnt that the two brothers have ventured out for sight-seeing, it is natural that they rushed to have a glimpse.

Obviously there was a big crowd eager to have the Lord's 'Darshan'—a divine glimpse. So those who heard first rushed out to avoid the jostling of the surging crowd. Another reason for their rushing out of their houses and leaving aside the work they were currently engaged in was that Lord Ram and Laxman were walking briskly ahead because they had to see the city and return to the sage before sun-set; they could not afford a leisurely stroll. So the people thought that if they wasted time, they would miss the opportunity.

This is a normal course the way things happen even today. If some important dignitary is visiting any town or city, the citizens keep on hold their personal work and line up on the roadside to see him.

It is said later that if one likes his homestead at the cost of having love and devotion for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita then surely the creator has turned away from such a man and has corrupted his intellect—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.

We also find that when Lord Ram is moving towards the forest from Ayodhya, all the people who lived in the villages and hamlets on the way rushed out to have the Lord's divine glimpse. All of them wanted to be near the Lord, talk with him and serve him in the best possible way they can. There were instances when someone could not reach in time, then he would ask others in which direction the Lord and his brother Laxman and the Lord's consort Sita had gone, and then they would try to rush there to see the three of them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111—to Doha no. 122. The love and affection as well as the eagerness with which the citizens of Janakpur rushed out to see and meet Lord Ram and Laxman is similar to the scene witnessed while the Lord passed through the villages on his way to the forest as cited in the above references.

It is to be noted that in both the instances, that of the citizens of Janakpur and the villagers living alongside the path of Lord Ram to the forest, the people have rushed out to see the Lord leaving aside the work they were engaged at that moment.

Compare: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 220 with respect to the citizens of Janakpur, and Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 221 with respect to the people who lived along the Lord's forest route. The similarity is absolutely striking.

The message that we get from this discussion is that having devotion and love for the Supreme Being should take precedence over all affairs of this mundane world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 23; (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 46; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 73; and (iv) Uttara Kand, Doha no. 104 Ka.

²Now, the condition of the citizens is compared to lifelong paupers who suddenly find the doors of a great treasury open for a limited time when they are allowed to loot as much as they can. There would be a huge crowd, pushing, shoving, jostling, elbowing and even tramping over each other in order to get in, fill their bags and pockets as fast as they can, and rush out to call in their friends who may have missed out.

So, the citizens pushed and shoved each other to come up front to view Lord Ram and Laxman at close quarters and strike a pleasant conversation with them—such as saying a mere 'hello' or asking them from where they have come, their names etc.]

निरखि सहज सुंदर दोउ भाई । होहिं सुखी लोचन फल पाई ॥ ३ ॥

nirakhi sahaja sundara dō'u bhāī. hōhīm sukhī lōcana phala pāī. 3.

The citizens of Janakpur derive immense happiness, pleasure and joy by considering themselves exceptionally fortunate that they have been able to see the naturally pretty form of the two brothers which was like getting the reward of their eyes¹ (3).

[Note—¹The eyes are the organs by which one sees this world. A person sees so many things, both pleasant as well as unpleasant. His eyes feel happy and enjoy looking at pleasant things, and would avoid looing at unpleasant sights, wincing at them. So, when the citizens watched the divine form of Lord Ram and Laxman, they felt that their eyes have been fully rewarded today because they have never seen such a wonderful form earlier and would never see any such form in the future.

In other words, the divine sight of the two brothers captivated the mind and the heart of the citizens of Janakpur. They were enamoured of Lord Ram and Laxman's beautiful form, and were completely enchanted and enthralled by the sight.

The two brothers are in their normal day-to-day attire. They do not wear anything flashy or pretentious. The importance of this line is to highlight the natural beauty and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman. This charm is free from any artificiality.

Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Laxman represents Prakriti, Nature. The significance of this verse is that the Lord's visible creation that is known as 'Nature' is naturally and inherently most beautiful and fabulously wonderful. The towering mountains, rolling hills, verdant forests and green valleys, cascading waterfalls, absolutely fascinating variety of colourful flowers, fruits and trees, the astounding number of various forms of flora and fauna that decorate the earth, and the wonders we see in the visible sky and beyond it in its invisible parts—are all the creations of Brahm, and all of them are beautiful beyond description.

This is Lord's 'natural' form, a form that is 'naturally beautiful'. It also means that Brahm is beautiful because whatever exists in the form of Nature, or 'Prakriti', is a manifested form of Brahm himself.]

जुबतीं भवन झरोखन्हि लागीं । निरखहिं राम रूप अनुरागीं ॥ ४ ॥

jubatīm bhavana jharōkhanhi lāgīm. nirakhahīm rāma rūpa anurāgīm. 4.

The women-folk of the city flocked the balconies and windows of their homes, and watched fascinated and awe-struck at the enchanting beauty of Lord Ram's glorious form. (4)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/62, stanza no. 1.

The women-folk of the city were exceedingly enamoured by the Lord's pretty form and, as we shall see right below in the next verses (from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223) chatted animatedly amongst themselves about him. They were excited and electrified by the betwitching charm of Lord Ram.

One important point to note is this: While the city's children and men-folk were overjoyed by looking at both Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Chaupai no. 3 immediately above, as well as Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 241 later on below), the women-folk were more focused on Lord Ram alone (refer also to Doha no. 241 below).

There is subtle reason behind it. A woman represents the Lord's Maya—his mystical powers that entangle a creature in worldly affairs and incites passion and desires in him. Maya is compared to a 'female dancer', and *not* a male dancer. She dances to the tune of her master and lord, Sri Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116.

A woman is compared to Maya, the delusion creating powers of Brahm that keeps a person entangled in this web-like world, and is the most ferocious and powerful tormentor. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 where Lord Ram tells Narad why he did not allow him to get married; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99 where sage Kaagbhusund is describing the deluding affects of Kali-yug.

Now the obvious question is "why were they not attracted to Laxman"? Well, the answer lies in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 116 Ka and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8. In brief they say that both 'Bhakti' and 'Maya' come under the category of being a female. Their lord is Brahm, who in this case has manifested himself as Lord Ram. Now, Bhakti is very dear to Lord Ram, and Maya is like a maid. The Maya, being a 'maid', is always afraid to annoy 'Bhakti', the Lord's favourite. Laxman represents 'Bhakti', and therefore the women-folk, who represent 'Maya' are afraid to raise their eyes towards him for the fear of annoying Lord Ram. So they let Laxman be alone.

One female is not attracted to another female as much as she is to a male. This is the universal law of Nature. Since Laxman represents Bhakti, a symbolic female, while the women-folk represent Maya, another symbolic female, the latter weren't attracted to Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 116.

These observations must not be misconstrued on any count, for we shall be soon reading that these women-folk also refer to the two brothers though the main focus of their attention is Lord Ram. In this context, please see note appended to Doha no. 220 below.]

कहहिं परसपर बचन सप्रीती । सखि इन्ह कोटि काम छबि जीती ॥ ५ ॥

सुर नर असुर नाग मुनि माहीं । सोभा असि कहूँ सुनिअति नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kahahiṃ parasapara bacana saprīṭi. sakhi inha kōṭi kāma chabi jīṭi. 5.
sura nara asura nāga muni māhīṃ. sōbhā asi kahum̐ suni'ati nāhīṃ. 6.

[The following narration tells us about the excitement amongst the women-folk of the city of Janakpur as they saw Lord Ram and Laxman walking down the streets. While the children and the males had poured on the streets to have a close interaction with the two brothers, the women remained in their homes and looked from balconies, windows, terraces etc. Being enthralled at the fabulous sight of the two pretty princes walking majestically, with a huge crowd of children and adults following them and talking with them, smiling and gesturing affectionately, the women too got electrified and wondered if king Janak would still stick to his vows of marrying Sita to someone who broke the bow or would cancel the event and marry her directly to the elder of the two princes. These ladies had never seen such a wonderful sight in their lives or even imagined that they would be lucky to ever see it any time in their lives. The divine sight of Lord Ram and Laxman completely left them spell-bound and dumb-founded.]

These women-folk talk with each other affectionately and animatedly—‘Oh friend! They (Ram and Laxman) appear to have overtaken (surpassed) the beauty of many thousand Kamdeo (cupids) taken together. It appears that they have defeated all of them and taken over their charm and beauty for themselves.’¹ (5)

We have not heard² of such divine beauty and charm anywhere in this creation—not even amongst the gods, the human beings, the demons, the serpents (subterranean creatures) and the sages and seers. [Here, all senior classes of living beings whose members have a form that may have attractive physical features have been cited.]² (6)

[Note—¹The women open up their hearts and have no inhibitions in expressing their feelings. All of them had developed instant ‘affection’ for Lord Ram, implying that their Atma (i.e. their soul) immediately got attracted to the Parmatma (the Supreme Atma) who was before them. This is also what happened with king Janak when he first saw Lord Ram and Laxman at the time of his going to welcome sage Vishwamitra. The king too was bowled over by the divine charm of the two brothers, and he too could not resist himself to ask the sage if they were personified forms of Brahm. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 216.

If this can happen to the enlightened king Janak, what is the wonder if the ordinary women are also overwhelmed by the pretty sight and the divine halo effusing out of the Lord like rays from the sun or the soothing light of the moon?

There is a wild chatter; everyone seems to have an opinion and everyone seems to share her views with great excitement.

‘Kamdeo’ is the most handsome god. So he has been cited to indicate that Lord Ram’s beauty is thousands of time more than this god. In other words, Lord Ram is extremely beautiful, and the Lord’s beauty and charm are so bewitching and fabulous that they surpass anything imaginable and known in the entire creation consisting of the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327; (iii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 220; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91.

A same idea is expressed in—(i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, line no. 2 of stanza no. 10; and (ii) Janki Mangal, verse no. 50, line no. 2.

This is the first lady who is speaking. As we progress through the discussion between these enchanted ladies of Janakpur, we will discover that there are eight who have expressed their opinions. These eight represent all the women-folk of Janakpur; they are like their spokespersons. These eight women symbolize the eight forms that the subtle aspect of Nature has taken to praise their Lord, the cosmic Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush. This would be the metaphysical interpretation of the chief eight spokeswomen who speak on the behalf of the entire creation.

Remember: In metaphysics, Nature, or 'Prakriti', has been visualized as a female, and the Viraat Purush is their male counterpart. Together, by their union, they caused the coming into being of this creation.

The eight subtle aspects of Nature are the following—earth, water, fire, air, sky, Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), and Ahankar (ego). These are called the 'eight Tattwas' or the eight fundamental elements of creation.

They are represented by their eight manifested forms called 'Sakhi' or a female friend. Their names appear in a book titled "Janki Rahasya", in its Canto 8. The name of these eight female 'friends' are the following—Laxmana, Shubhrashila, Bhadra, Maanwati, Leela, Shyaama, Shaanta, and Sushila. Laxmana was also known as Chaarushila.

The first amongst them to speak is Laxmana. She represents the first of the eight Tattwas starting from the subtlest one, i.e. the 'Ahankar element'.

Out of them, only the following three were believed to be married, and the rest were still unmarried. The three married Sakhis and their husbands are the following—(i) Chaarushila or Laxmana was married to Virsena; (ii) Shubhrashila to Subhadra; and (iii) Shaanta to Virmani.

²It is to be noted here that the women use the word 'heard' when expressing about their knowledge of persons of exceptional physical charm, instead of using the word 'seen'. This is significant because these women maintained the dignity of their families and respect for tradition of the time when women of cultured families abstained from venturing out into the public, and never roamed around gaping at other men. They had only 'heard' about the charming appearances of gods, kings, princes, demons, sages and seers, as well as the legendary serpents who are said to have ruled the subterranean world from tales and stories told down the generations.

Compare this to other women of loose moral character, such as Supernakha, the sister of Ravana who was also enamoured of the beauty of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord in the forest so much so that she had the temerity to propose to marry him. At that time she had told Lord Ram that she had been wondering all over the world but has never found someone suitable for her so that she can marry him. Now, the word 'found' implies that she had been 'closely looking' at each eligible person whom she would propose, but even after searching and roaming the whole world she did not 'see' anyone that suited her heart. But now she said that she is very fascinated by Lord Ram's beauteous form, and has decided that he is most suitable to married by her. So she proposed to the Lord. Supernakha hasn't 'heard', but actually roamed around the world searching for a suitable groom for herself. It simply means that she had been 'gazing' at men, looking them up closely, scrutinizing their physical features, and therefore had 'seen' all the handsome men in the world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. that precedes Doha no. 327.

It was expected of Supernakha as she was a female demon who lacked all moral scruples, but it cannot be ever expected from women of a cultured society.

³By citing gods, humans, demons, serpents and sages, the women-folk mean the 'entire creation'. The heaven is represented by the gods, the earth is represented by the humans, the demons and the sages, and the subterranean world by the serpents. Refer also—Ram Charit Manas—(i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 80.]

बिष्नु चारि भुज बिधि मुख चारी । बिकट बेष मुख पंच पुरारी ॥ ७ ॥
अपर देउ अस कोउ न आही । यह छबि सखी पटतरिअ जाही ॥ ८ ॥

biṣṇu cāri bhuja bidhi mukha cārī. bikaṭa bēṣa mukha pañca purārī. 7.
apara dē'u asa kō'u na āhī. yaha chabi sakhī paṭatari'a jāhī. 8.

Lord Vishnu has four hands, the creator Brahma has four heads, and Lord Shiva, the slayer of the demon Tripura, has five mouths (faces) and attire that is most odd and horrfying.¹ (7)

There are no Gods senior to these three, and there are none with whom this astounding beauty and charm (of Lord Ram) can be compared. (8)

[Note—¹These three Gods constitute the Trinity. They are the senior-most Gods. All of them have unconventional forms—e.g. Lord Vishnu, the sustainer, has four arms; the creator Brahma has four heads; and Lord Shiva is the oddest of the three. Shiva not only has five faces but remains almost naked, has elephant hide and serpents wrapped around his body, wears a garland of skulls, has ash smeared all over his body, and lives like a recluse hermit.

If this is the situation with the senior Gods, no one can expect their juniors to be better than them. So the women-folk reject them as criterion or standards with which the beauty of Lord Ram can be judged or compared.

The most handsome of the Gods, i.e. Kamdeo (cupid), automatically comes within the purview of this comparison as he is a junior God.

What to talk of Lord Ram, these Gods are no match for the charm that ordinary citizens of Janakpur have—Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 314.]

दो०. बय किसोर सुषमा सदन स्याम गौर सुख धाम ।
अंग अंग पर वारिअहिं कोटि कोटि सत काम ॥ २२० ॥

dōhā.

baya kisōra suṣamā sadana syāma gaura sukha dhāma.
aṅga aṅga para vāri'ahim kōṭi kōṭi sata kāma. 220.

The two princes, one of a dark complexion and the other of a fair complexion¹, are young and in their adolescence (i.e. in their teens), and are not only treasures of fabulous beauty and divine charm but also providers of immense bliss, joy and happiness.

Their beauty is so stupendous, so bewitching and profound that millions of Kamdeos (cupids) appear to have been sacrificed on each of their limbs². (Doha no. 220)

[Note—¹Earlier in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes this Doha no. 220 we have read that the women-folk were focused on Lord Ram alone. But now in this Doha and a little later on in Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221 below we read that the women refer to both the brothers, Lord Ram as well as Laxman in clear terms.

It means simply that while Lord Ram was their main focus of attention but they were also watching Laxman; they weren't neglecting him. Tulsidas is very clever indeed. At first he writes that their attention was focused on Lord Ram to indicate how these women representing the 'Maya' aspect of creation were shying away from their female counterpart 'Bhakti' represented by Laxman. But then if Laxman was totally neglected, thought Tulsidas, it would not be proper on three counts—one, it would be tantamount to sidelining Bhakti, two, his narration would be wrong in its authenticity and detail because when two gentlemen are walking together, and they happen to be equally charming and attractive, it will look very odd and untruthful to say that those who had assembled to look at them saw only one and turned a blind eye to the other, and three, it would be undermining the importance, the divinity and the charm of Laxman which would be intolerable for Lord Ram.

So, the narration oscillates between the women focusing their sight on Lord Ram at one instance, and seeing both the brothers at another instant.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91.]

चौ०. कहहु सखी अस को तनुधारी । जो न मोह यह रूप निहारी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu sakhī asa kō tanudhārī. jō na mōha yaha rūpa nihārī. 1.

This first lady concluded her observations by saying to all her companions who were listening attentively—‘Say friend, who amongst those who have a body (referring not only to the humans but even to other living beings who belong to the zoological kingdom) will not be enchanted, enthralled, captivated and overwhelmed by watching this wonderfully beautiful form (of the two brothers)?’² (1)

[Note—¹This lady is the first of the eight ‘Sakhis’. Refer note of verse no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220 above.

²It ought to be noted here that though this lady refers to only members of the animate members of the living creation, such as for example the human beings, but elsewhere it is clearly said that the charm of the two brothers was so divine that the entire world consisting of the animate as well as the inanimate forms of living beings got enthralled by it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 204.

Does it mean that the gods were not charmed by this magnificent sight of Lord Ram and Laxman? No, it is not so by any means; they too were equally enthralled by the beautiful view of the two brothers. There are countless instances of this. Refer an elaborate note appended to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223 below.]

कोउ सप्रेम बोली मृदु बानी । जो मैं सुना सो सुनहु सयानी ॥ २ ॥

kō'u saprēma bōlī mṛdu bānī. jō mair̥m sunā sō sunahu sayānī. 2.

Replying to her observation, someone else² said in a sweet voice—‘Oh wise one! Listen to what I have heard about them. (2)

[Note—¹This is the second ‘Sakhi’ or female friend. Her name is Laxmana. She represents the next Tattwa or element of creation, i.e. the ‘sky’ element. This is because she says that she will now ‘tell’ them whatever she has heard about the two princes. ‘Hearing’ is one of the functions of the sky element because sound waves travel in space.

Laxmana’s mother was Vidagdha, and father was Yashshaali. She used to sit with her friends and gossip. So it believed that she had heard of the two brothers from one betel-seller’s daughter who had married someone of Ayodhya.]

ए दोऊ दसरथ के ढोटा । बाल मरालन्हि के कल जोटा ॥ ३ ॥

मुनि कौसिक मख के रखवारे । जिन्ह रन अजिर निसाचर मारे ॥ ४ ॥

ē dō'ū dasaratha kē ḍhōṭā. bāla marālanhi kē kala jōṭā. 3.

muni kausika makha kē rakhavārē. jinha rana ajira nisācara mārē. 4.

These two boys are sons of king Dasrath¹. They look as beautiful as a pair of divine Swans². (3)

They have protected the fire sacrifice of sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) where they have killed fierce demons.³ (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath was famous, so this lady did not elaborate further regarding who the father of the two princes was, and it sufficed for her to say that the two brothers were ‘sons of king Dasrath of Ayodhya’.

Now, a question arises as to how did the citizens come to know that Lord Ram and Laxman were the ‘sons of king Dasrath of Ayodhya’? Well, when Janak enquired of sage Vishwamitra about the two brothers and who they were at the time of his welcoming the sage upon his arrival at Janakpur, the sage had clearly told them that the two brothers were sons of Dasrath and their names were Ram and Laxman. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/66, stanza no. 2; verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 1; and verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 1.

²A Swan is regarded as a majestic bird of dignity and beauty. Hence, the two brothers are compared to this bird.

³This clearly means that the news of the valiant deeds of Lord Ram and Laxman have already reached Janakpur.

When sage Vishwamitra had introduced Lord Ram and Laxman to Janak, all those accompanying the king had heard about them, and when they returned to the city this news spread like wildfire. Numerous great kings and princes had also come, but it was only sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers who were shown special attention by king Janak so much so that he personally went to receive them and then escorted them back to the city and then lodged them in his personal guest house reserved for state guests—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 217. So

obviously the two brothers acquired a special status in the city, and their arrival was the talk of the town.]

स्याम गात कल कंज बिलोचन । जो मारीच सुभुज मदु मोचन ॥ ५ ॥

कौसल्या सुत सो सुख खानी । नामु रामु धनु सायक पानी ॥ ६ ॥

syāma gāta kala kanja bilōcana. jō mārīca subhuja madu mōcana. 5.
kausalyā suta sō sukha khānī. nāmu rāmu dhanu sāyaka pānī. 6.

[These two verses describe Lord Ram.]

He who has a dark-complexioned body and eyes that resemble a beautiful lotus is the one who had trounced and crushed the pride and arrogance of the demons Marich and Subahu. (5)

He is the son of Kaushalya, and is like a mine of blissfulness, joy and happiness. His name is 'Ram' and he holds a bow and an arrow in his hands. (6)

[Note—We are now talking about the women-folk who are discussing the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman as they walk through the streets of Janakpur surrounded by a crowd of children and adults. So this particular lady points out the special distinguishing features of Lord Ram, such as his 'dark complexioned body', to clearly indicate about whom she is talking. Then she says that his mother is Kaushalya and that he had vanquished the pride and arrogance of Marich and Subahu.

She wanted to make sure that others who were hearing her attentively would be able to know which of the two brothers she was talking about so as not to leave any scope for confusion. Since Marich was not killed but flung away into the far-off ocean, his pride and arrogance have been said to be trounced and crushed by Lord Ram. Again, this 'crushing of the pride and arrogance' of Marich and Subahu implies killing of Subahu as well because these demons had started treating themselves as invincible and unable to be killed by anyone, let alone two lonely princes.]

गौर किसोर बेषु बर काछें । कर सर चाप राम के पाछें ॥ ७ ॥

लछिमनु नामु राम लघु भ्राता । सुनु सखि तासु सुमित्रा माता ॥ ८ ॥

gaura kisōra bēṣu bara kāchēṁ. kara sara cāpa rāma kē pāchēṁ. 7.
lachimanu nāmu rāma laghu bhrātā. sunu sakhi tāsu sumitrā mātā. 8.

[Now this wise and enchanted lady points out Laxman to her companions and says—]

The fair complexioned pretty young boy who has beautiful attire and charming demeanours (walking) behind him (Lord Ram), who holds a bow and an arrow in his hands [7] is 'Laxman'. He is the younger brother of Ram. Listen friend, his mother is Sumitra [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Laxman always walks behind Lord Ram as a mark of respect for the Lord, as well as to act as his guard. Later on, when they are on their way to the forest during the Lord's exile, this same pattern of walking is observed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 123.

Laxman has his bow and arrow at the ready, prepared to protect Lord Ram should the need arise.

Now, once again, a pertinent question comes to the mind: Sage Vishwamitra had not told anyone while introducing the two brothers about the names of their mothers. Then how did this lady come to know their names?

Well, the answer is that king Dasrath was very famous, and his kingdom bordered that of Janakpur. Hence almost everyone in Janakpur, especially those who were highly placed in the hierarchy of the society, was acquainted about Dasrath's queens. When Lord Ram and his other brothers were born, the news of which queen gave birth to which son must have spread.

Another traditional story is that one betel-seller's daughter named Vasisthaa was married to someone from Ayodhya, and it was she who had spread this news.]

दो०. बिप्रकाजु करि बंधु दोउ मग मुनिबधू उधारि।
आए देखन चापमख सुनि हरषी सब नारि॥ २२१॥

dōhā.

biprakāju kari bandhu dō'u maga munibadhū udhāri.
ā'ē dēkhana cāpamakha suni haraṣīm saba nāri. 221.

After having finished the work of the 'Vipra' (literally a Brahmin, but here referring to the protection of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice), the two brothers have come to see the bow-breaking ceremony. On the way here they had provided liberation to the wife of a sage (this refers to the liberation of Ahilya).'

When the ladies, who were assembled there, heard this, all of them felt very glad. (Doha no. 221)

[Note—The ladies were glad on two counts. First was the information that these two boys would attend the bow-ceremony when these women would have another chance to watch Lord Ram and Laxman for a long time uninterrupted. This is proved when later on we shall read that the venue was bursting at its seams at the time the ceremony was held. All the citizens had rushed to occupy a vantage point, and the royal heralds and attendants had a tough time controlling the crowd and seating them all. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 240 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

And second reason for the happiness of these ladies was that they are noble-hearted and gracious princes who have liberated a sinful lady known as Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. This second bit of information was very well received and filled these women-folk with great hope and expectation. They hoped that these two princes would help them to overcome any sins they might themselves have committed in life.

This news of Ahilya's liberation was of exceptional importance for the citizens of Janakpur—because the royal priest of king Janak, named Sataanand, was the son of sage Gautam and his wife Ahilya. So naturally and obviously the entire population of Janakpur felt highly obliged to Lord Ram when they learnt that he had liberated Ahilya from her curse.

Another reason for the women-folk feeling happy after learning about the noble and exalted background of Lord Ram was that they felt that he is a suitable groom for Sita, the daughter of king Janak for whose marriage the bow-breaking ceremony was being organized.

King Janak was searching for a brave and strong groom for his daughter Sita, so when the ladies learnt about the killing of the demons by Lord Ram to protect the fire

sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, they felt all the more happy that there are more than average chance now that the king would somehow circumvent his declaration of marrying Sita to the person who breaks the bow, and instead marry her to Lord Ram. See verse nos. 1-2 below.

Even if Janak did not break his vows, they guessed, then at least Lord Ram would be allowed to lift the bow like other competitors, and now it is sure that he will break it. Both ways, they felt, Sita would be married to this prince. And then they will have a lifelong opportunity to see their beloved Lord whenever he comes to pay a visit to his in-law's place.]

चौ०. देखि राम छबि कोउ एक कहई । जोगु जानकिहि यह बरु अहई ॥ १ ॥
जौं सखि इन्हहि देख नरनाहू । पन परिहरि हठि करइ बिबाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

dēkhi rāma chabi kō'u ēka kaha'ī. jōgu jānakihi yaha baru aha'ī. 1.
jaur̥ sakhi inhahi dēkha naranāhū. pana parihari haṭhi kara'i bibāhū. 2.

Watching the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram's form, someone amongst the ladies¹ asserted—'This prince is worthy of becoming a groom for princess Janki (Sita). (1)

Oh friend, if the king (Janak, the father of Sita) sees him (even once), it is sure that he will discard his vows and insist on their marriage.'² (2)

[Note—¹This is the third 'Sakhi' or female friend who speaks. According to tradition, her name was Hema. Her mother was Subhadra, and father was Arimardan. She represents the 'Tej' or the fire element. She endorses the statement of her friends who had made previous comments.

²These verses indicate that not everyone in the city is aware of the fact that Janak has already met the Lord while receiving sage Vishwamitra, and that the king has brought them to the city and has himself lodged them at some palace. Many great kings and princes have come, but no one was shown special privilege by king Janak.

Women are fond of discussing the worthiness or otherwise of a particular boy as a groom for a girl. So, after being over-awed by the wonderful sight of the two brothers and their physical charm, the ladies start debating the worthiness of the elder of the two brothers as a groom for princess Sita, and come to the conclusion that Lord Ram is the most suitable candidate to be selected as a groom for Sita.

There is another important implication here. Lord Ram's physical form and features are delicate and tender, and so is his age. He does not look overbearing like a body-builder or an athlete, and is still in his early teens. Other kings and princes who have collected at Janakpur to try their hands on the bow are apparently physically more strong, muscular and well-built, and higher in age as compared to Lord Ram.

So this kind lady means that once king Janak sees Lord Ram, it is natural that he would mentally decide to marry off his daughter Sita to this noble prince without insisting on first testing Lord Ram's strength by letting him to try lift the bow and breaking it before marrying him to his daughter Sita, because the Lord is too tender for the bow and Janak would not take this risk. Instead, the king would find some excuse to cancel the ceremony, and marry Sita directly with Lord Ram.

In the previous Doha no. 221, the lady who was speaking then had referred to ‘both the brothers’. So our present lady interjects to say in effect that the elder of the two brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, is the suitable groom for Sita. This is in accordance with established social norms that the elder brother gets married first. Her view is endorsed by another friend in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223 below when she says that “the creator who has created Sita had thoughtfully created the dark-complexioned groom (i.e. Lord Ram)”.

One examines two things to determine whether a boy is suitable as a groom. These are— (i) his family background, and (ii) his personal qualities. Lord Ram fits the bill perfectly—he belongs to a famous and reputed dynasty, the Raghu Dynasty of Ayodhya, and his matchless personal qualities, divine virtues, mystical powers and glories have already spread in the world as is clear from what these ladies had themselves acknowledged in Doha no. 220 and 221 along with their intervening Chaupais. So, Lord Ram definitely fits the bill as the most suitable groom for Sita.

In Tulsidas’ book “Janaki Mangal”, Chanda no. 7, the women pray to Lord Shiva that the prince with the dark complexion (i.e. Lord Ram) should be the groom of Sita, and they (the city’s women-folk) should be given an opportunity to sing auspicious songs befitting this occasion.]

कोउ कह ए भूपति पहिचाने । मुनि समेत सादर सनमाने ॥ ३ ॥

सखि परंतु पनु राउ न तजई । बिधि बस हठि अबिबेकहि भजई ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u kaha ē bhūpati pahicānē. muni samēta sādara sanamānē. 3.
sakhi parantu panu rā'u na tajaī. bidhi basa haṭhi abibēkahi bhajaī. 4.

Yet another lady¹ commented wryly and poignantly, ‘But dear friend, the king has already come to know them. He has welcomed them along with sage Vishwamitra. (3)

But oh friend, inspite of recognizing him (Lord Ram) and being aware of his virtues and glories, the king remains adamant. He does not want to go back on his vows (for fear of ignominy and social rebuke) and refuses to abandon his stubbornness (regarding marrying Sita to anyone whoso breaks the old Bow of Lord Shiva).² (4)

[Note—¹This is the fourth Sakhi or female friend. Her name was Kshemaa. Her mother was Shobhaawati, and father was Riputaapan. She represents the ‘earth element’ as she talks about the king going physically to meet sage Vishwamitra and then bringing him along with the two princes to lodge them in the city.

²When the previous lady said that if the king sees Lord Ram then he is sure to change his views and decide to marry his daughter Sita with the Lord in some way, her friend corrected her by saying that it is not the case as the king knows who the two brothers are, as well as Lord Ram’s astounding glories. He has welcomed them along with sage Vishwamitra, and the sage had himself told him, in front of his courtiers, about Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217.

But unfortunately, till now the king has given no hint that he has changed his mind, or that he is canceling the bow ceremony. The king is reputed to be steadfast in his vows, no matter what happens. So it is extremely unlikely that he will change his track now and somehow declare his intention of marrying Sita with Lord Ram. The chances of this happening are almost nil.

Later on we shall read that even Sita laments at the stubborn attitude of her father who does not understand or realise the consequences of his decisions on her fate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 258.

The reason for Janak not abandoning his vows is clarified by the king himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, the 1st half of Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252 where he laments that “if I abandon my vows or go back on my words, all my good reputation and glories would crumble”.

Refer also to: (i) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 66, 69 and 70 which say that a king finds his glories if he is steadfast in his vows and true to his words; that had the king seen Lord Ram before he made the vow of marrying Sita to anyone who broke the bow he would certainly not have made this condition for her marriage in the first place; and that after making this vow and inviting all the kings it will be highly ridiculous, shameful and ignominious for him to rescind on his words now in the front of the society at this late hour.

(ii) In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 1 which says “king Janak’s vows (words) are as strong and unbendable as the Vajra (Indra’s weapon made of the strongest material in existence) and an elephant’s tusk”.

कोउ कह जौं भल अहइ बिधाता । सब कहँ सुनिअ उचित फलदाता ॥ ५ ॥
तौ जानकिहि मिलिहि बरु एहू । नाहिन आलि इहाँ संदेहू ॥ ६ ॥

kō'u kaha jaum̐ bhala aha'i bidhātā. saba kaham̐ suni'a ucita phaladātā. 5.
tau jānakihi milihi baru ēhū. nāhina āli ihām̐ sandēhū. 6.

One of their friends¹ had a very positive and sprightly attitude as she tried to inject hope and expectation to the discussions which had resulted in creating an atmosphere of despair and gloom till now.

She said spiritedly—‘If what we have heard of the Creator that he is benevolent and gracious, and that he gives suitable rewards to his subjects, is correct and true [5], then be assured that Janki (Sita) will get this prince as her groom. Oh friend, there is no doubt in this [6].’² (5-6)

[Note—¹This is the fifth Sakhi. Her name is Baraaroḥa. Her mother was Modini, and her father was Mahimangal. She represents the ‘water element’. She seems to be eager about having perpetual opportunities to have ‘Darshan’ or divine viewing of Lord Ram. this will be clear in the following Chaupais and Doha no. 222. She is sentimental, and when one becomes emotional tears well up in his or her eyes. Hence, she symbolizes the water element.

²This lady is wise and bases her assertion on solid reasoning which she explains to her companions in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 223 which we shall be reading below. When the other ladies heard her logical arguments, all of them were reassured that it is indeed true that Sita would be married to Lord Ram—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 223.

Besides the logics presented by the wise lady, there is another very important factor why Sita would definitely be married to Lord Ram. It so happened that the two brothers had gone to the royal garden to pluck flowers for sage Vishwamitra’s worship rituals. At that time, Sita had also gone to offer her prayers to Parvati, the Mother Goddess and the divine consort of Lord Shiva to whom the bow—which was at the focal point of the marriage ceremony—belonged. As if by providence, the two—Lord Ram and Sita—

chanced to see each other. Instantly Sita resolved that Lord Ram would be her groom. She prayed to Parvati and silently expressed her desire to the Goddess who answered back to tell Sita in clear terms that her wishes would be fulfilled. So, how can it be otherwise? This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Sortha (a type of Doha) no. 236.]

जौं बिधि बस अस बनै सँजोगू । तौ कृतकृत्य होइ सब लोगू ॥ ७ ॥
सखि हमरें आरति अति तातें । कबहुँक ए आवहिं एहि नातें ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ bidhi basa asa banai sam̐jōgū. tau kṛtakṛtya hō'i saba lōgū. 7.
sakhi hamarēm̐ ārati ati tātēm̐. kabahum̐ka ē āvahim̐ ēhi nātēm̐. 8.

When the assembled women heard this assertion of their wise friend, all of them felt very happy and said in almost unison—‘If the Creator indeed makes this happen (i.e. if it really turns out by providence and a stroke of good luck that Lord Ram is indeed married to Sita), then all of us would become fulfilled and all our desires would be deemed to be realised. (7)

Oh friend! We are very eager and impatiently waiting to learn when he (Lord Ram) will be tied in this alliance (of marriage with Sita) so that he will be often visiting this place (Janakpur). (8)

[Note—Verse no. 8 clearly tells us why these women-folk are so eager that Lord Ram marries Sita. Once this happens, Lord Ram would be visiting Janakpur because the city would become his in-law’s place. When this happens, these ladies, who have literally lost their hearts to Lord Ram, will have repeated opportunity to see their beloved Lord again and again in their lives.

Remember: This is a devotional form of love, a soul-touching and purest form of love between a Jiva (living being) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Being, the Lord God), and there is no trace of a negativity in it at all.

A true devotee looks for an excuse—any excuse—to be with his chosen deity, his Lord as much as possible. In this case, the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram is the ‘excuse’ that the women-folk are relying on to get an opportunity to see their Lord again in life! The following Doha no. 222 clarifies this point further.]

दो०. नाहिं त हम कहूँ सुनहु सखि इन्ह कर दरसनु दूरि ।
यह संघटु तब होइ जब पुन्य पुराकृत भूरि ॥ २२२ ॥

dōhā.

nāhim̐ ta hama kahum̐ sunahu sakhi inha kara darasanu dūri.
yaha saṅghaṭu taba hō'i jaba pun'ya purākṛta bhūri. 222.

Otherwise oh friend, having the rare chance to see their (Lord Ram and Laxman’s) divine and holy form is very remote and almost impossible for us.¹

This² can happen only when we have a huge stock of good and meritorious deeds done in our past lives (so that we can cite them while praying to our repective deities to

prevail upon them to heed our requests that Lord Ram marries Sita by breaking the Bow, for then the Creator and the deities whom we worship regularly would be obliged to heed our prayers as it is said that one is always entitled to be rewarded for any good deed done by him or her in life as is equally true for the punishment for any bad or evil deeds done).’* (Doha no. 222)

[Note—¹This is because once the ceremony is over and Sita gets married to someone else, Lord Ram and Laxman will never come back again. They have come at present to witness the bow-ceremony at the behest of sage Vishwamitra. When they go back home, there is no reason why they should come again.

The ladies say that the chances of their seeing Lord Ram again are ‘very remote and almost impossible’ if he does not marry Sita, but they do not ‘completely rule out this possibility—howsoever remote it may be’. Why is it so? Well, the kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur are not very far away, and some sort of interaction between the citizens of the two kingdoms was in vogue. It may have been in the form of trading or marital relationships, or just plain tourism. But no vast oceans had to be crossed, and neither were the two kingdoms at war which would have prohibited the citizens of any kingdom from visiting the other.

So, in case someone was extremely desirous of meeting someone from the other kingdom, all he or she had to do was travel to that place. So the meaning is very clear now—if any one of the ladies desired to see Lord Ram sometime later on in her life, then she could do so but only if she traveled to Ayodhya. For men such travel would not be as much a big deal as it would be for the women—for the simple reason that in traditional societies women were not expected to move out of their homes except under special circumstances. Hence, such a visit to Ayodhya to merely see their beloved Lord Ram would be ‘rare and almost impossible’ if not ‘outright impossible’, or ‘completely out of the question’ or ‘absolutely unimaginable’.

²The women say that to have a ‘Darshan’ of the Lord—i.e. to have a divine view of the holy form of Lord Ram, it is necessary that one has accumulated spiritual rewards that come with doing auspicious and meritorious deeds. Because if one has been sinful in his past life, then such a privilege of having a divine sight of the Lord and being close to him is not possible.

*This emotion that without having done good and meritorious deeds it was impossible to have a chance to see the divine form of Lord Ram is reiterated later on by the citizens when they rush out to meet the Lord and his brothers at the time of the departure of the marriage party back for Ayodhya after the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 335.]

चौ०. बोली अपर कहेहु सखि नीका । एहिं बिआह अति हित सबही का ॥१॥

caupāī.

bōlī apara kahēhu sakhi nīkā. ēhiṁ bi'āha ati hita sabahī kā. 1.

One of the ladies¹ agreed with her (i.e. with her friend who had said that she is certain that the Creator would make it so happen that Sita will marry Lord Ram—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 222). She said—‘Oh friend, you have spoken well. Everyone’s best interests will be served with this marriage.’² (1)

[Note—1 This is the sixth Sakhi or female friend. Her name was Padma-gandha. Her mother was Sobhnaangi, and father was Balaakar. She represents the ‘air’ element. This is because like the air element which injects life in the entire creation, she injects hope of a happy life in everyone.

²This lady meant that not only the close family members of Sita and Lord Ram will derive pleasure and happiness with this union, but it will also give the same degree of cheer to the citizens of Janakpur as well as of Ayodhya, along with making the gods and sages happy too. Hence, this marriage will serve the ‘best interests of all’; it will make everyone happy—both in this world as well as in the heaven.

It will make Sita happy because she herself wants to marry Lord Ram—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 229, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234—to Sortha no. 236.

It will make Lord Ram happy because he too was enthralled by the sight of Sita when they first met in the royal garden when the Lord had gone there to bring flowers for sage Vishwamitra so much that even after returning to their lodging place Lord Ram was lost in the thoughts of Sita—refer: Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239.

In the case of *Sita*, Goddess Parvati had assured her that her desires would be fulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda, and in the case of Lord Ram it was sage Vishwamitra who had assured the Lord the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237. In this context, refer also Baal Kand, Doha no. 326.

Janak was already charmed by Lord Ram, and internally he would surely have wished that the Lord should be the groom for his daughter Sita. Refer—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217; and (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 222 respectively. Janak’s joys and exhilaration when Lord Ram had broken the bow and made it sure that now no hurdle stood for his marriage with Sita too proves the point—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.

Lord Ram’s father, king *Dasrath*, was obviously delighted when the news of the Lord’s marriage with Sita arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 290; (ii) Doha no. 325.

Lord Ram’s brothers *Bharat* and *Shatrughan* were equally delighted as were the queens—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 291.

As for *Laxman*, he was like a shadow of Lord Ram, and during the moments just before the bow was actually broken, Laxman had cheerfully and delightedly alerted all the guardians of the earth to be ready for the jolt and thunder that would accompany the breaking of the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.

The *mother* of Lord Ram (Kaushalya), as well as of Sita (Sunayana), and all other members of the *royal household* and the *city* were obviously ecstatic.

For happiness in *Ayodhya*, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 293—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

For happiness in *Janakpur*, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 263; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 286; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287—Doha no. 289.

As for the *Gods'* happiness, there are countless instances. However, we shall cite some of them here for reference: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 265; (iv) Doha no. 285; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309; (vi) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314—to Doha no. 315; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 317; (viii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

कोउ कह संकर चाप कठोरा । ए स्यामल मृदुगात किसोरा ॥ २ ॥

kō'u kaha saṅkara cāpa kaṭhōrā. ē syāmala mṛdugāta kisōrā. 2.

Yet another lady¹ expressed her doubts and reservations when she said—‘Lord Shiva’s Bow is stern and strong, while this dark-complexioned prince has a tender body and a delicate frame, and is still too young of age for such a formidable task.’² (2)

[Note—¹This is our seventh Sakhi. Her name was Sulochana. Her mother was Vilaksha, and father was Tejastha. She stands for the ‘Mana’ element. This is because she uses logical thinking to challenge the views of others, and harbours doubts in her mind which is characteristic of the functioning of the mind. By her logics she has all but deflated the sense of hope and expectations formed by the positive opinions of her predecessors.

²Elsewhere also such doubts are expressed. For instance—(i) Sita herself was perplexed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 258; (ii) Sita’s mother Sunayana too expressed her strong reservations in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 255. In Janki Mangal she expresses her confoundedness to her friends in verse no. 73.

Refer also to Geetawali where the citizens of Janakpur too show their doubts if Lord Ram would be able to lift and break the strong bow of Shiva. The instances in Baal Kand of Geetawali are the following: (i) verse no. 68, stanza no. 8.

The same reservation is narrated in Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 10 where it is said that Lord Shiva’s bow is harder than the shell of a tortoise, and therefore next to impossible to break.]

सबु असमंजस अहइ सयानी । यह सुनि अपर कहइ मृदु बानी ॥ ३ ॥

सखि इन्ह कहँ कोउ कोउ अस कहहीं । बड़ प्रभाउ देखत लघु अहहीं ॥४॥

sabu asamanjasa aha'i sayānī. yaha suni apara kaha'i mṛdu bānī. 3.
sakhi inha kahaṁ kō'u kō'u asa kahahīm. baṛa prabhā'u dēkhata laghu ahahīm.
4.

All the lady friends had their own views about the outcome of the present situation; some had serious doubts but others were confident that things would go the right way as they wish. When the wisest among them¹ heard all her friends making their own conclusions and assumptions, she decided to intervene and put all debates to rest with her solid reasoning supported by logic and proof. So she said sweetly—(3)

‘Oh Friend! Contrary to all you have said, let me tell you one thing. It is said that he (Lord Ram) only looks simple and delicate in physical terms, but his abilities, his

prowess and strength are immense and bellies the impression one gets by merely seeing his tender body and young age.² (4)

[Note—¹This is our eighth Sakhi. Her name is Subhaga, her mother was Vineeta and father was Mahaavirya. She represents the ‘Buddhi’ or intellect element. She is the most wise and intelligent in the group as she uses proof and sound logic to support her argument that Lord Ram is sure to break the bow irrespective of how strong or unbendable it is.

²She goes on to outline her points of logic to support her contention that Lord Ram will be the winner in the bow-breaking competition. Though not expressly stated here, she must have told the gathering about the slaying of the demons Tadakaa and Subahu as well as the whole demon army. She must have told them about how Marich was flung across the ocean by a single arrow. She also must have told them about sage Vishwamitra personally selecting Lord Ram and Laxman to kill the demons over countless other options that the sage surely must have thought over and rejected, and how the two brothers had cheerfully protected the sage’s fire sacrifice without the least effort. All these things are deemed to have been outlined by her in the assertions she made.]

परसि जासु पद पंकज धूरी । तरी अहल्या कृत अघ भूरी ॥ ५ ॥
सो कि रहिहि बिनु सिवधनु तोरें । यह प्रतीति परिहरिअ न भोरें ॥ ६ ॥

parasi jāsū pada paṅkaja dhūrī. tarī ahalyā kṛta agha bhūrī. 5.
sō ki rahihi binu sivadhanu tōrēm. yaha pratīti parihari'a na bhōrēm. 6.

By touching the dust of whose holy feet the most sinful Ahilya found her liberation and deliverance from the curse [5], will that same prince not be able to break the bow of Lord Shiva? Don’t neglect this aspect (or logic, proof) and have confidence that our affections will bear fruits [6]. (5-6)

[Note—Ahilya had been turned into a stone. If she could be liberated from this form and transformed into a divine lady who regained her original form as the wife of sage Gautam, is it difficult, by any stretch of imagination, that a prince who possesses such stupendous super-human mystical powers would not break the stubborn resistance that our fate might create in fulfillment of our desires that he marry Sita and become permanently related to all of us as citizens of Sita’s kingdom so that we may have repeated opportunities to see his divine form and derive the pleasure of our lives?

And by the same logic, would he not break the jinx that surrounds Sita’s own fate, should there be any, by breaking the bow and removing the last barrier that separates her future happiness from the perplexities and mental agonies of uncertainty that she must be facing at present?

If Lord Ram can clean Ahilya of her sins, then will he not clean us and Sita of our sins if we have any? Why do you all harbour senseless doubts that don’t stand the test of logic? So, come on. Have faith like Ahilya had that one day Lord Ram will liberate her and break her jinxed fate. Rely upon your affection for the Lord and be assured that all our desires will be fulfilled.]

जेहिं बिरंचि रचि सीय सँवारी । तेहिं स्यामल बरु रचेउ बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥

jēhiṁ birāñci raci sīya samvārī. tēhiṁ syāmala baru racē'u bicārī. 7.

The Creator who has created Sita and bestowed her with all the beauty she possesses is the same Creator who has also painstakingly created the dark-complexioned prince to match her (beauty and charm).¹ (7)

[Note—¹This wise lady seems to tell her companions—“So why do you worry? The Creator is not a child; he is a master-craftsman. He thinks carefully before creating each unit of creation, and takes into consideration all angles before actually giving this unit its final form. When he created Sita he thought things over and then went ahead to create her companion with great care so that the trouble he had taken in painstakingly moulding her charming form does not go in vain by uniting her with a companion who would not suit her. Sita was the Creator's special unit; he has put in all his creating skills while moulding her form and then deciding her destiny. So he must have taken special care while creating her companion, and by the way it looks the dark-complexioned prince, i.e. Lord Ram, is the match the Creator had crafted for Sita. So why shall we worry when the Creator has already decided Sita's destiny?

Remember, the Creator has created this world with two sides, each complimenting the other. The male and the female are the two facets of his creation just like a coin which has two sides that perfectly fit and match with each other to make the coin have its value and usefulness. A deformed coin or one in which one of the faces is defaced is useless and without any value. What is the use this coin has for the king; which king would make a coin that defaces his own face and makes him an object of ridicule in this world? Similarly, what is the use of a mismatched creation for its creator? Hence, if the Creator took so much trouble to carefully mould Sita's form as well as Lord Ram's form then surely he must have had some grand plan in his mind. He surely must have crafted them to match each other to perfection. This translates into a certainty of Sita and Lord Ram being united.”

This lady's assertion reiterates what someone else had already said in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 222 above.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 67, stanza no. 3.]

तासु बचन सुनि सब हरषानीं । ऐसेइ होउ कहहिं मृदु बानीं ॥ ८ ॥

tāsu bacana suni saba haraṣānīm. aisē'i hō'u kahahim mṛdu bānīm. 8.

Everyone attentively heard her council, and felt reassured and exhilarated. They exclaimed cheerfully in unison with sweet voices—‘Let it be so; let it happen as you say!’ (8)

[Note—Since her arguments and logics were irrefutable, everyone readily agreed with her. All of them sort of blessed her and hoped that her words would turn out to be a reality. Everyone was now certain that Lord Ram will indeed marry Sita.

There is a spiritual message in this friend's statements. She has highlighted only Ahilya's liberation. And this single example had convinced all her friends that Lord Ram will surely fulfill their desires. In other words, stress is laid on devotion and unflinching faith in Lord Ram and his divinity. If a devotee is absolutely sure that if he takes refuge in the Lord all his wishes would be fulfilled, it is going to be that way. On the other hand, if one goes on doubting and debating, he will never find peace and mental rest like the case of the ladies before this last one cited the case of Ahilya.]

दो०. हियँ हरषहिं बरषहिं सुमन सुमुखि सुलोचनि बृंद ।
जाहिं जहाँ जहँ बंधु दोउ तहँ तहँ परमानंद ॥ २२३ ॥

dōhā.

hiyam̐ haraṣahim̐ baraṣahim̐ sumana sumukhi sulōcani bṛnda.
jāhim̐ jahām̐ jaham̐ bandhu dō'u taham̐ taham̐ paramānanda. 223.

The women-folk who had pretty faces and charming eyes were extremely exhilarated in their hearts, and they enthusiastically showered flowers upon the two brothers (from their perch in the balconies and roof-tops) wherever they went. (Doha no. 223)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman were walking down the streets of Janakpur for sight-seeing. Children and men accompanied them and followed them round the city, but the women stayed in their homes and showered flowers on the two brothers from their perches on the balconies and roof-tops. They also extended their hands through the windows to throw flowers on the two brothers.]

This is the first instance of flowers being rained upon Lord Ram and Laxman at Janakpur. Later on we shall read that the Gods too have showered flowers from the sky—but that happens after the bow is broken and Sita has put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 285; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314.

A similar situation of bliss, happiness and joy spreading everywhere wherever Lord Ram goes is seen later on during his forest exile. As he passed through the villages and hamlets on the way, all their residents felt very happy and excited. This happiness and bliss prevailed everywhere, in each village and hamlet through which the Lord passed on his onward journey to the deep forest. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

चौ०. पुर पूरब दिसि गे दोउ भाई । जहँ धनुमख हित भूमि बनाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

pura pūraba disi gē dō'u bhā'ī. jaham̐ dhanumakha hita bhūmi banā'ī. 1.

The two brothers (Ram and Laxman) went to the east of the city where the arena for the bow-breaking ceremony was located. (1)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman's main purpose of coming to Janakpur was to witness the bow-breaking ceremony. So it is natural that they would like to see the arena. Even in modern times, when some great domestic or international game or other form of competition is organised in a big city and someone visits the city during this period, he would naturally like to see the stadium or the venue of the event.]

All roads leading to the site were specially decorated, and it aroused natural curiosity in one's heart.

The two brothers had come from the western side of the city. This is because the river Ganges near where Ahilya was liberated lies on the west of Janakpur. The bow-breaking venue was on the city's eastern fringe. This clearly means that they had crossed the city and had seen all the important sites along the way.]

अति बिस्तार चारु गच ढारी । बिमल बेदिका रुचिर सँवारी ॥ २ ॥

ati bistāra cāru gaca ḍhārī. bimala bēdikā rucira samvārī. 2.

At the center of the venue was a beautiful and spacious paved area that was large in area and plastered with lime and mortar ('Gaca'). A gentle slope from this ground led up to an elevated area where the altar ('bēdikā'—a raised platform) was situated at its middle. This altar was wonderfully decorated and clean (as Lord celebrated Bow was to be kept on it). (2)

[Note—The word "Gaca" refers to a slanted slope leading up to a platform. Today we have steps, but in some temples in the south of India this tradition still survives, where large stone slabs are used to pave the way from the lower surrounding area up to the main platform of the temple.

The word also implies that it was paved with glass pieces instead of ordinary stone slabs.

The main altar was decorated even more beautifully with gems and priceless stones. It is the marriage ceremony of a great king's daughter where all the renowned kings and princes of the time had been invited. It is obvious that in these circumstances all the resources of king Janak would have been mobilized to impress the guests.

Even today when foreign dignitaries arrive or international competitions are held in a country, all plugs are pulled to leave an upfront good impression upon the guests.]

चहुँ दिसि कंचन मंच बिसाला । रचे जहाँ बैठहिं महिपाला ॥ ३ ॥

तेहि पाछें समीप चहुँ पासा । अपर मंच मंडली बिलासा ॥ ४ ॥

कछुक ऊँचि सब भाँति सुहाई । बैठहिं नगर लोग जहँ जाई ॥ ५ ॥

cahum̐ disi kañcana mañca bisālā. racē jahām̐ baiṭhahim̐ mahipālā. 3.

tēhi pāchēm̐ samīpa cahum̐ pāsā. apara mañca maṇḍalī bilāsā. 4.

kachuka ūm̐ci saba bhām̐ti suhāī. baiṭhahim̐ nagara lōga jaham̐ jāī. 5.

Behind this main platform, on all the four sides of it, were erected elevated seats made of gold where the invited kings (and princes) would sit. (4)

Still behind this ring were the seats meant for the male citizens of Janakpur. These seats were arranged on a higher sloping or terraced ground (so that everyone could have a clear view of the altar). (5)

[Note—The layout and construction of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony was like we have in modern stadiums. At the center was the altar where the bow would be placed. It was on a high platform. Surrounding it were rows after rows of seats. Some of the front seats meant for dignitaries and invitees were closer to the main altar and formed the inner ring of seats. The ground was tapered so that the person sitting in the front row did not

obstruct the view of the person behind him. The common people were to be seated in the back row and on erected balconies.]

तिन्ह के निकट बिसाल सुहाए । धवल धाम बहुबरन बनाए ॥ ६ ॥
जहँ बैठें देखहिं सब नारी । जथा जोगु निज कुल अनुहारी ॥ ७ ॥

tinha kē nikaṭa bisāla suhā'ē. dhavala dhāma bahubarana banā'ē. 6.
jaham' baiṭhēm dēkhahim saba nārī. jathā jōgu nija kula anuhārī. 7.

Near and behind the back row of seats were made the balconies designed like small cabins or rooms which were fully decorated and colourful, looking wonderful like homes of nobility. They were decorated with crystals ("Dhawal" means white and glittering). (6)

The women-folk of the city were to sit here according to their caste, clan or place in the social hierarchy, and watch the events from there. (7)

[Note—Women and men were seated separately to conform to the traditions of the society. Whereas men were to be seated on open seats, the women were to remain in special enclosures that resembled large balconies and windows of homes.]

पुर बालक कहि कहि मृदु बचना । सादर प्रभुहि देखावहिं रचना ॥ ८ ॥

pura bālaka kahi kahi mṛdu bacanā. sādara prabhuhi dēkhāvahim racanā. 8.

The boys of the city (who had followed the two brothers from the time they first stepped out to go sight-seeing) cheerfully and enthusiastically pointed out the salient features of the venue with sweet and pleasant voices. They took the Lord (Sri Ram, and his brother Laxman) around the site and showed him everything with due respect and honour. (8)

[Note—This verse summarises the description of the venue. It also means that the excited children went round the venue with Lord Ram and Laxman, joyfully pointing out everything to them—where the bow would be kept, where the kings would be seated, where the men-folk would be seated, and where the women are to be seated.

When we read further we will notice that these children have become very friendly with Lord Ram and have struck a cordial relationship with the two brothers. Some of the children are holding the Lord's hands, some are tugging at his clothes, some are trying to speak loudly so that the Lord's attention is drawn towards them, some are running ahead while some are by the side of the Lord, and a large group follows from behind. These electrified children are having the most enjoyable time of their lives—giggling, smiling, running, hopping, skipping, tottering and stumbling in the melee and getting up to dust their clothes, huffing and panting, sneering at each other in trying to shout others down so that they can draw the attention of the two brothers and be heard by them, and in general creating a fascinating sight that entralls the mind of the beholder.

The children were aware that the ground of the bow-breaking ceremony was consecrated as Lord Shiva's bow was to be kept there. So when they were moving around the altar and other close-by places, they showed the greatest respect to the place.

Another important interpretation is this: Though it is true that the city children were so excited by meeting Lord Ram and Laxman—especially when they found that these brothers did not have any sort of 'airs' about them and were freely mixing with them like

they were their fast and old friends, the children overcame all initial hesitations and inhibitions that the children usually have when they meet strangers for the first time. As time passed they become very informal with Lord Ram and Laxman—touching them and pulling them here and there. But this should not be construed to mean that they were being rude to the two brothers. These children showed the greatest respect and honour to both Lord Ram and his brother Laxman.

The Lord understood this—and this is why he did not mind at all about their childish pranks and behaviour. This is abundantly clear in the following verses.]

दो०. सब सिसु एहि मिस प्रेमबस परसि मनोहर गात ।
तन पुलकहिं अति हरषु हियँ देखि देखि दोउ भ्रात ॥ २२४ ॥

dōhā.

saba sisu ēhi misa prēmabasa parasi manōhara gāta.
tana pulakahim̐ ati haraṣu hiyam̐ dēkhi dēkhi dō'u bhrāta. 224.

On this wise and with the pretext of showing the two brothers around the city and the venue, the children touched the Lord's divine body, making their own bodies thrilled and ecstatic by this touch (as it was an electrifying experience for them). Their hearts were overwhelmed with joy and happiness (on seeing the two brothers from up so close and interacting with them in a friendly and intimate manner). (Doha no. 224)

[Note—These children are so very fortunate indeed. The Lord for whose divine glimpse great hermits, ascetics, sages and seers spend their entire lives doing Tapa and other forms of spiritual efforts but still are unable to have his vision is now mobbed by ordinary children who touch him, tug at his clothes, talk with him and hold his fingers and hands as they excitedly take Lord Ram and his brother Laxman round the city and the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony.]

चौ०. सिसु सब राम प्रेमबस जाने । प्रीति समेत निकेत बखाने ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sisu saba rāma prēmabasa jānē. prīti samēta nikēta bakhānē. 1.

[Now, Lord Ram and Laxman have come out of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony and are on their back to the place where they have been odged with sage Vishwamitra. The children show them their own homes, and the Lord praises them.]

Lord Ram had realised that the children had become overwhelmed with affection and love for him. So when these children came near their own homes, they lovingly pointed them out to the Lord who in his turn praised them (i.e. the Lord admired their homes and said that they were all so beautiful, large, colourful and attractive to make these children happy). (1)

[Note—Lord Ram is a noble prince with a friendly disposition and amiable nature. He had never behaved in a chivalrous manner, showing arrogance and ego by unnecessarily creating an artificial aura of majesty and nobility when it was not needed. But inspite of this he ensured that basic codes of decent behaviour were adhered to.

Even when he was a child himself and went to play with other boys of his age at Ayodhya he was invariably friendly with them, and these boys maintained discipline and decorum because they knew that he was their prince and future king. So even when playing together they still maintained dignity and kept an honourable distance from Lord Ram and his brothers. The boys of Ayodhya did not mob him, did not tug and pull at him, and did not touch him or his clothes like the children of Janakpur. The reason is simple—while the children of Ayodhya were afraid to do anything that might annoy Ram or his brothers, or even their father, king Dasrath, which would invite strong punishment, no such inhibitions were applicable to the children of Janakpur. For them, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were simply their ‘friends’. These excited children had developed a very strong bond of friendship and cordiality with the two brother, even calling them with whatever names they felt like, and may have even invited them into their homes for a short visit or for snacks (refer next verse no. 2).]

निज निज रुचि सब लेहिं बोलाई । सहित सनेह जाहिं दोउ भाई ॥ २ ॥

nija nija ruci saba lēhim bōlāī. sahita sanēha jāhim dō'u bhāī. 2.

The children called the two brothers with names according to their own liking, and to places they wanted them to see and visit. Overcome with the affection and love shown by these innocent children towards them, the two brothers responded positively and lovingly, gladly going to wherever they were called by the children.¹ (2)*

[Note—*This entire description of children flocking around Lord Ram and Laxman, touching the Lord, catching hold of his hands and fingers, pulling him here and there, tugging at his clothes, calling him by different names, and jumping all around him with excitement, and the Lord reciprocating their gestures and emotions with equal love and affection has a big message for us.

The message is sharp and clear: If we wish to come so close to the Supreme Lord that we can actually touch him and feel him, if we want to be so close to him that all formalities are done away with, if we wish to remove all barriers between ourselves and the Lord of our devotion, if we want that the Lord is at our beck and call—then we must turn ourselves to become as innocent and lovable as a child.

Remember: The Lord was followed by children as well as by adults. But only the children felt free to touch him, tug at him, pull him here and there, call him in any direction, and address him by any name they fancied for him, while the adults maintained a respectful distance and could not muster enough courage to act like their own children. Had they done so, they would be rebuked and called mad. Hence, it is much, much easier to attain the Lord if we are like these innocent children who observed no formalities, who did not even know the meaning of the word prince or a guest-of-honour with whom one must act with dignity and respect, as compared to knowledgeable adults who observed formalities because they knew how to treat someone who is a guest-of-honour of their king, who is by all counts a great prince of a great kingdom because their own king, Janak, has shown them such special favour by personally going to receive them and then escorting them to the city to lodge them at a special palace.

For the children, Lord Ram was a dear friend and playmate; for the adult citizens he was their king's special guest, a prince of high stature. That made the difference.

Thus, the greater is the innocence of our heart, the more intense is our devotion for the Lord God, the greater is our affinity for him, the more intense is the Lord's response, and the more closer he comes to us.

¹If we visualize the scene in our mind we can easily imagine what might be happening. As has been noted in the note appended to verse no. 1 above, besides showing Lord Ram and Laxman the sights of the city, the children excitedly pointed out their own homes to them on their way back to the lodging place where they were staying with sage Vishwamitra. Sure enough some of these children would call them by their names or by any nickname they had devised for Lord Ram and Laxman, or simply as brothers, pals, friends etc. Some of the children bade them goodbye on the street, some invited them in their homes for a visit or for meeting their parents or for some rest and refreshment. Still others pulled them away to show them some other landmarks or sights that were out of the way, and still others pointed out their schools and playgrounds. The Lord obliged them all smilingly, with cheer and equal measure of enthusiasm so as not to make the children unhappy and feel that the Lord is not paying attention to them.

Remember: Lord Ram is not an ordinary human prince, though his physical body and appearance is such. He is a personified form of the Supreme Being, the Lord of the entire creation. It is no wonder that the same Lord could make his presence felt at the same instant at different places to oblige all the children. The proof of this actually happening will come indirectly later on in a different context at two places.

These are the following:--(i) When Bharat had gone to the forest to try bring Lord Ram to Ayodhya, he was accompanied by a large party of the citizens of Ayodhya. When they met Lord Ram in the forest at a place called Chitrakoot, all of them were eager to meet the Lord. So Lord Ram obliged them all and met them in the way they all liked to meet him. This means, some met him as their beloved prince, some treated him as their friend, some as their Lord, some elder citizens had treated him like their sons, and so on and so forth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 244.

(ii) When the Lord returned to Ayodhya after his forest exile, every citizen of Ayodhya was eager to meet and welcome the Lord individually. From practical point of view this was impossible. So what did the Lord do? He assumed countless forms, as many as there were number of citizens. And then he met each one of them individually, embracing them without consideration of caste or sect of society. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 6 which are absolutely explicit on this point.

The Lord did not get annoyed when the children insisted that he come here and then there; rather he went there cheerfully and gladly. This is because Lord Ram had realised that the children are overwhelmed with affection and love for him, and the Lord wanted to honour each of their wishes because the Lord honours only one quality in this world, and it is having love for him. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

राम देखावहिं अनुजहि रचना । कहि मृदु मधुर मनोहर बचना ॥ ३ ॥

rāma dēkhāvahiṃ anujahi racanā. kahi mṛdu madhura manōhara bacanā. 3.

Lord Ram showed his younger brother (Laxman) the design and general layout of the city as well as of the venue (of the bow ceremony), explaining to him in sweet and pleasant words their special features, their outstanding beauty and charming construction. (3)

[Note—Originally it was Laxman who was eager to see the city. As the two brothers moved around, Lord Ram discovered that he was the center of attraction, and felt that Laxman might feel neglected and ill-at-ease. So, the Lord affectionately described the city to Laxman as they passed by important places. In effect, the Lord repeated to Laxman what the excited children were giving a virtual running-commentary about.]

लव निमेष महँ भुवन निकाया । रचइ जासु अनुसासन माया ॥ ४ ॥

भगति हेतु सोइ दीनदयाला । चितवत चकित धनुष मखसाला ॥ ५ ॥

lava nimēṣa mahum̐ bhuvana nikāyā. raca'i jāsu anusāsana māyā. 4.
bhagati hētu sō'i dīnadayālā. citavata cakita dhanuṣa makhasālā. 5.

The Almighty Lord whose cosmic dynamic powers known as Maya is so powerful that it can create the entire universe in a fraction of a second that it takes one to blink as soon as the Lord wishes that to happen¹ [4], the same merciful and kind Lord is so gracious that he looks at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony with awe and stunning astonishment just to please his devotees (the children and the men who are accompanying him round the city)² [5]. (4-5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 21 where Hanuman tells Ravana about Lord Ram's mystical powers that prove he is the supreme Lord of creation.

The same idea that the entire creation is merely a hair on the body of the Viraat Purush is reiterate in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192 when mother Kaushalya offers her prayers to the Lord at the time of his birth.

Once again, it is said that the cosmic form of the Lord is like a huge tree from which countless universes emerge like its fruits—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 13 where sage Kumbhaj has prayed to Lord Ram.

²These two verses are included to remove any trace of doubt one might have in his mind about the incompatibility of two things—one, that Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being who is supposed to know everything, and two, as the way he feigns ignorance and eagerly sees all the sites of the city like ordinary tourists, at the way Lord Ram seems enchanted with the beauty of the city, the way he has to be told about the different places by the children and adults as if he does not know about them, and the way he goes here and there when called by the excited children.

Well, Lord Ram is doing all this to please and oblige the ordinary people of the land, whether they are children or adults, who do not have the mental ability to reach the transcendental state of spiritual existence attained by great ascetics and sages who have become self-realised and enlightened to realise the Supreme Being and understand the Lord's existence in the form of the 'Atma', the pure conscious soul. For ordinary creatures who cannot digest and fathom the intricacies of metaphysics and theology, the easiest way to attain the Lord is the sacred path of 'Bhakti' (devotion and love for the Lord).

The entire objective of this narration of the Lord going out to sight-see the city of Janakpur is precisely this—to provide an opportunity to ordinary people to have the divine experience of having the Lord in their midst. The Lord was not there amongst the ordinary citizens to boast of his super-natural powers to impress them, by saying for instance ‘I know this and I know that; or this is not perfect and that is faulty because of this and that reason’. So even if there were imperfections in the constructions and designing and decorations etc. the Lord still greatly praised them and those who erected these structures so that everyone felt happy and pleased.

The Lord acts in a way and does everything that pleases his devotees. He behaves as if he is bound to the ways of the world as well as the physical body that he adopted to become a human, but actually he is independent of all obligations and free from all fetters—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 73; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 101; and (iv) Lord Shiva’s words asserting this fact in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 39.

The Lord had come on earth to spread love, happiness and joy, and not to criticize and find faults. Does not the Lord know what faults his creation has; does he need to be snobbish and haughty and pretentious to make himself appear high and mighty and exalted in front of ordinary mortals who would be awed at the presence of a super-human amongst them?]

कौतुक देखि चले गुरु पाहीं । जानि बिलंबु त्रास मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥
जासु त्रास डर कहूँ डर होई । भजन प्रभाउ देखावत सोई ॥ ७ ॥

kautuka dēkhi calē guru pāhīm. jāni bilambu trāsa mana māhīm. 6.
jāsu trāsa ḍara kahum̐ ḍara hōī. bhajana prabhā'u dēkhāvata sōī. 7.

After having watched the novelty of the mighty fine and spectacular sights of the city that held the mind and the imagination of the beholder in thrall, and the wonderful way it was decked up for the bow-breaking ceremony, as well as having experienced the emotional way the citizens had warmly welcomed the two brothers, the Lord hurried to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). They were worried that it was already too late. (6)

He by whom even the God of Terror is affrightened (i.e. the latter does not have courage to defy Lord Ram and gainsay the Lord)—is the same Lord who is showing the mystical powers of Bhakti (the grand virtues of devotion and love) by feeling scared at annoying the sage for being late¹. (7)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had promised sage Vishwamitra that he will go and come back ‘immediately’ or ‘soon’ after showing the city to Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 218. And now the sun has set and it was dark, and they have been wondering in the city late. Sure enough, the sage would be worried and would get angry at them for being late in returning.

Lord Ram is affright that he is getting late to return to sage Vishwamitra. The Supreme Lord who instills fear even in the heart of the Terror God because the latter dare not disobey him, is feeling worried that the sage would get annoyed and angry at him for being late. The Lord indirectly gives the message that if one has ‘Bhakti’ for him, the Lord cannot gather courage to offend such a person or not do according to his wishes. Vishwamitra had ordered them

Sage Vishwamitra loved Lord Ram like his son; the sage for once had forgotten that these two princes are none but manifestations of the Supreme Being, the Lord of the entire creation, but out of intensity of love and affection for Lord Ram and Laxman he had started to treat them as his 'ward'.

The sage must have got worried that it was getting dark, and the two boys have yet not returned. What has happened to them—have they got lost in the big city? So, Lord Ram thought, that the sage will take him to task for being late and making him restless about his security and well-being.

Well, had the sage's Mana (heart and mind) not been overwhelmed with love and affection for the two brothers and had lived in the transcendental plane of existence where it knew that Lord Ram is Brahm personified, then there was no question of the sage getting worried about the safety of the two brothers. Well, he was not in the beginning—as proved by the fact he determined that they would fearlessly face and kill the demons without any doubt. When he let Lord Ram and Laxman stand guard during his fire sacrifice, he did not worry about their safety. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 210.

But then the merciful Lord had to show the dispassionate sage what joy and happiness lies in having a heart of a devotee who loves his Lord more than anything in existence. The Lord had to show the renunciate hermit what sweet nectar there is in the virtues of love and affection as opposed to dry metaphysical knowledge and theological doctrines. So he invoked these virtues in the dry-as-nut Mana of the enlightened sage.

For a detailed note on how the sage forgot for once that the two princes accompanying him are not ordinary princes but Brahm in a personified form, please see elaborate notes appended to Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 209 above.

The assertion that even 'Terror' is afraid to annoy his Lord is reiterated elsewhere also where it is said that "even 'Kaal', the God of death, is scared to annoy the Lord"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

कहि बातें मृदु मधुर सुहाई । किए बिदा बालक बरिआई ॥ ८ ॥

kahi bātēṁ mṛdu madhura suhā'īṁ. ki'ē bidā bālaka bari'ā'īṁ. 8.

When Lord Ram realised that he is getting late, he politely took his leave from the boys who were accompanying them. Using pleasant and sweet words, he had to forcibly bid good-bye to the boys. (8)

[Note—This verse and its preceding one are wonderful verses. Chaupai line no. 7 says that the Lord was afraid of the sage as he was getting late, and the reason is that the Lord wants to show the mystical effects of the power of Bhakti. The sage had great Bhakti for him, and the Lord had promised him that he will come back soon after a quick round of the city with Laxman.

And it so happened that in the city he met others who also had Bhakti for him—the citizens, the adult men and women, and the children. As has been pointed out earlier, the children represent purest form Bhakti as they have started loving their dear friend Ram and do not want to part with him. But the Lord was in a dilemma. Both the sage as well as the children had Bhakti, but the Lord had earlier promised the sage that he will come back soon. So, the Lord must honour the word given by him to his first devotee, the sage—which was that he will come back to him soon. Had he not given this word, the Lord would have stayed for a long time in the city, obliging the children by being with them, say till midnight.

The point is very clear. Therefore Lord Ram had no option but to bid good-bye to the children and return hastily to sage Vishwamitra.

There is one stark point staring at our faces here. The Lord took his leave from the 'children' and not from the 'adults' who also may have been following him round the city. But the difference is this: the adults may have gone for some distance from their homes or workplaces, and returned to resume the work they were doing. The children, on the other hand, followed the Lord wherever he went. On his way back, when these children reached their respective homes, they cheerfully asked the Lord to come in, or simply showed the Lord their homes, saying "Oh friend, I live here", and so on. Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 225.

No one wanted to leave the Lord as he swiftly moved in the direction of his lodging place—because he was getting late.

So, finally, the Lord had to persuade the hordes of children thronging him to go back to their homes even against their wills, using sweet and endearing parting words. This is the way of the world, and the Lord had to ensure that it is observed because he had assumed a human body that is subjected to, and is expected to obey these laws.

The presence of Lord Ram in their middle had the same effect on the children that a magnet has on iron pieces. The same dramatic scene is witnessed later on in this story of the Ramayan when Lord Ram had gone out of Ayodhya on his forest sojourn for 14 years. The grieving citizens of Ayodhya had followed the Lord from behind, deciding that their best of good and welfare lies in the company of the Lord they loved so much, even in the forest, and not without him in the city of Ayodhya. Lord Ram had tried all means and arguments to motivate them to return after the huge crowd following him had gone very far behind him. But the citizens refused to return. So, the Lord was forced—indeed with a heavy heart of the extreme kind—to use a trick to sneak out during the night when they were all asleep. The citizens grieved and wept like abandoned children, but they had no choice but to return to Ayodhya and wait patiently for the Lord to return at the end of the exile period. This heart-wrenching episode that rocks even the sternest of minds is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86.]

दो०. सभय सप्रेम बिनीत अति सकुच सहित दोउ भाइ ।
गुर पद पंकज नाइ सिर बैठे आयसु पाइ ॥ २२५ ॥

dōhā.

bhaya saprēma binīta ati sakuca sahita dō'u bhā'i.
gura pada paṅkaja nā'i sira baiṭhē āyasu pā'i. 225.

The two brothers reached the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) hesitantly, meekly and submissively, bowed before him affectionately, and then sat down after getting permission from him. (Doha no. 225)

[Note—Realising that they had been late in coming back, the two brothers approached the sage hesitantly and meekly as they feared that he would be angry at them. They politely bowed their heads before him as a mark of great respect and subtly requesting him to forgive them for being late.

The sage was a wise man. He had himself told Lord Ram that he should go and let the citizens of Janakpur enjoy the reward of having eyes by letting them have a divine view of the Lord's holy form. Refer: Doha no. 218.

So the sage was not at all annoyed for the two brothers being late; rather he understood the reason for it even without them saying it in clear words.

So the sage asked them to sit down. Had the sage been angry, he would have politely admonished them or at least not told them to sit down.]

चौ०. निसि प्रबेस मुनि आयसु दीन्हा । सबहीं संध्याबंदनु कीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nisi prabēsa muni āyasu dīnhā. sabahīm sandhyābandanu kīnhā. 1.

At dusk (nisi prabēsa), the sage (Vishwamitra) ordered everyone to do the religious observance known as 'Sandhya-bandan' (sandhyābandan)—prayers offered to the Sun-God as a visible manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being, by using the famous 'Gayatri Mantra'¹. (1)

[Note—From the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, the union of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the Jiva, the living being, is symbolised by the 'Sandhya'—meaning the point where two entities are joined.

The word 'Bandan' simply means to 'offer respects to', or 'to offer prayers to'. In other words, 'Sandhya-bandan' is a religious observance that symbolizes the union of the Jiva with Brahm. It is done regularly to remind the Jiva, at least three times of the day, that he must strive to establish a union between himself and Brahm.

Sandhya-bandan is a religious observance done three times a day—at dawn, at noon, and dusk. It is usually done near a water-body, such as a pond or river. The Gayatri Mantra is the standard Mantra used for this sacramental observance. It is usually done near a water-body, such a pond or river. Pranayam, a meditative process when the breath is controlled by a set of postures, is part of the ritual.

Sandhya-bandan consists of two basic stages—the first step is offering of prayers using the Gayatri Mantra and doing Pranayam, and the second step is offering of oblations to the Sun-God.

During the evening Sandhya-bandan, the first step is completed facing the east, and the second step is done facing the west.

During the morning Sandhya-bandan, the reverse process is followed—viz. the first step is done facing the west, and the second step is completed facing the east.

At noon, the process is done in such a way that first half of the sacrament is done according to the morning Sandhya-bandan, and the second half is done according to the evening process.

Now, it is classified into three types depending upon the time when it is done. For instance, the Sandhya-bandan that is done in the evening are of the following three types—(i) the best type of Sandhya-bandan is done at a time when sun has reached the western horizon but has yet not disappeared from sight, (ii) the medium is that which is done after the sun has set beyond the horizon but the stars are still not visible, and (iii) the lowest category of this sacrament is when it is done after the stars start appearing in the sky.

The reverse process is applicable to the one that is done in the morning. That means, the Sandhya-bandan that is done while the stars are still visible is the best, the one that is done after the stars vanish from sight but before the sun becomes visible in the eastern sky is medium, and the one done after sunrise is of the lowest type.

For the one that is done at noon, the best is that which is done in such a way that half of the process falls just before exact noon time, and half after it.

Refer also Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327 below.

The Gayatri Mantra is the following—“OM Bhurbhuvaha Swaha¹, Tatsaviurvarenyam², Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi³, Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat⁴”. This is known as the full Brahm Gayatri as it is dedicated to OM, the word which is used as a synonym for Brahm. It means ‘OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial (Bhu), the celestial (Bhuvaha) and heavenly worlds (Suwaha). I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the Sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path’. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).]

कहत कथा इतिहास पुरानी । रुचिर रजनि जुग जाम सिरानी ॥ २ ॥

kahata kathā itihāsa purānī. rucira rajani juga jāma sirānī. 2.

After completing the Sandhya-bandan ritual, the sages gathered together to say and listen to religious discourses (‘Kathaa’) based on ancient religious histories, known as the ‘Itihaas’¹, till about the middle of the night². This time was spent pleasantly³. (2)

[Note—¹Since sage Vishwamitra was the senior-most sage of the group, he was the one who told these stories from the Purans, and the others, including Lord Ram and Laxman, heard them attentively. Vishwamitra was a sage having a very long life, and he was highly learned and had a phenomenal memory. So every time an opportunity arrived to keep others occupied or entertained, as in the present case, they selected him to tell them something interesting from the past. Then the sage would quote some interesting anecdote from the ancient texts, known as the Purans and Itihaas that conveyed some form of religious messages. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 210; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 278.

²The time spent in telling such interesting stories was ‘Jug-jaam’ meaning ‘two Pahar’—which means 2 (‘Jug’ = 2) x 3 hours (‘Jaam’) = approximately 6 hours from sunset. This takes us to around midnight.

³The time of the night was ‘spent pleasantly’ because, one, the stories that the sage told the gathering were very interesting, and two, they had a devotional quotient which made them very attractive and pleasant to hear for the sages as well as the two brothers.]

मुनिबर सयन कीन्हि तब जाई । लगे चरन चापन दोउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥

munibara sayana kīnhi taba jāī. lagē carana cāpana dō'u bhāī. 3.

After that (i.e. just after midnight), the sage retired to sleep. The two brothers began to softly message and gently knead his legs (to give the sage comfort and provide relief from tired muscles and weary feet). (3)

[Note—The point to note here is that the two brothers did not deem fit to ask for the sage's permission to serve him by messaging his tired feet, whereas on all other occasions they have sought it. Well, the answer is that when a disciple serves his teacher personally, no formal permission is required, but for all other things it is needed.

Another reason was to serve the sage and make him pleased so that he gives them his blessings for the events that were to unfold the next day—at the bow-breaking ceremony. The third possible reason is to silently ask the sage to forgive the two brothers for any mistakes that they might have made till now. One such possible mistake was coming late after the tour of the city of Lanka.

The fourth reason is that this is the first opportunity that sage Vishwamitra has got to properly rest without any worries for what has to be done the next day since the time he left his hermitage to bring Lord Ram and Laxman from Ayodhya. First he went to Ayodhya, then he came back to his hermitage with the two brothers and got engaged in the arrangement and completion of the fire sacrifice, then he was kept busy by the regular administrative affairs of his hermitage, and then started on the journey for Janakpur. This was the first time he could sleep peacefully without any worries to be handled the next day.

It is a matter of practical experience that when one has a lot of work to do and his mind is occupied with it then though he might sleep daily for a few hours in the night yet he becomes tired. Only when the work is finished and his mind is free from the accompanying tension does he experience tiredness and fatigue overtaking him. It is then that he needs some real sleep and body message or gentle kneading of the tired muscles to relax them and help him feel rejuvenated the next day.]

जिन्ह के चरन सरोरुह लागी । करत बिबिध जप जोग बिरागी ॥ ४ ॥

तेइ दोउ बंधु प्रेम जनु जीते । गुर पद कमल पलोतत प्रीते ॥ ५ ॥

jinha kē carana sarōruha lāgī. karata bibidha japa jōga birāgī. 4.

tē'i dō'u bandhu prēma janu jītē. gura pada kamala palōṭata prītē. 5.

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) whose holy feet are reverentially sought to be attained by renunciate and dispassionate hermits and ascetics by doing so many different kinds of Japa (repetition of holy Names of the Lord God as well as the Mantras which are spiritual formulas) and Yoga (meditation) [4], the same brothers seemed to be conquered (overwhelmed) by the Guru's (sage Vishwamitra's) love and affection for them so much so that they dutifully and respectfully message his legs and softly knead their tired muscles [5]. (4-5)

[Note—Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, and Laxman is his devoted follower; Lord Ram has Laxman always by his side. When one wishes to please the Lord it is equally important to please the Lord's devoted follower, his devotee. Nothing pleases the Lord more than pleasing his close devotee. That is why both the brothers are referred to in these verses.

Now, the way to reach the Lord is through various spiritual practices, such as doing Japa and Yoga. Many ascetics and hermits attempt to attain the holy feet of the Supreme Being by taking recourse to these methods, but they are only a few who succeed. In other

words, attainment of the Lord is a tough task. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 32.

But the same Lord is easily attainable by un-adulterated devotion, love and affection. Sage Vishwamitra has developed fatherly love for them, and a father's love for his children is pure, simple and sincere. At the time of handing the two brothers to him, king Dasrath had clearly asked the sage that henceforth he is their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

The spiritual message here is clear: If we wish to have closeness with our Lord, then the easiest and most convenient way is to have undiluted and truest form of devotion for him, to love him from the deepest recesses of our hearts. If we do it, the Lord will not think twice before reciprocating our love for him, and he will be at our beck and call.

The Supreme Being is unconquerable, but the only thing that makes him subdued is love, affection and devotion. The Lord feels so obliged by the sage's love and affection for him that he messaged the latter's feet to give him comfort. Messaging or rubbing the feet of someone while he sleeps is regarded as an excellent form of personal service.

The importance of having love for Lord Ram as a means to please the Lord more than anything else has been asserted by Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 117 Kha.]

बार बार मुनि अग्या दीन्ही । रघुबर जाइ सयन तब कीन्ही ॥ ६ ॥

bāra bāra muni agyā dīnhī. raghubara jā'i sayana taba kīnhī. 6.

Raghubar (Lord Ram) went to sleep himself only after the sage (Vishwamitra) repeatedly asked him to do so. (6)

[Note—Normally, Lord Ram would obey what the sage told him even once, but this time he had to be told repeatedly to go and sleep, and the sage took no offence at this diobedience.

This is remarkable. It is because the sage realised that the two brothers were showing their greatest of respect to him by serving him personally, with great affection and with the greatest devotion.

Remember—the two brothers were princes of a great empire, and as such they were not ordinarily expected to serve a humble sage by messaging his legs like ordinary servants. The wise sage realised this, and felt overwhelmed with love for the two brothers instead of getting annoyed at them.

Not stopping to message his legs at the first request does not mean that Lord Ram or Laxman are being disobedient to him, the sage understood, but it only shows that they want to serve him more and ensure that he gets more comfort and feels more relaxed by the soft rubbing they are doing to his tired legs. They have all walked so long a distance, and the two brothers felt that the old sage must be very tired. Only a very devoted and faithful son or disciple or servant will have this sort of concern for his parent or teacher or master like the two brothers are now showing for the sage. They want to give him as much comfort as is possible for them even at the cost of their own weariness.

Remember: All of them had walked the same distance—right from Ayodhya to the sage's hermitage at Siddha-shram, and from there to Jankpur. If the sage was tired, so were the two brothers. Being princes who are accustomed to all sorts of physical comfort, the compassionate sage felt that if he does not tell Lord Ram to stop, and allows the brothers to continue messaging his legs, then they will not stop for the rest of the night in their enthusiasm for giving him maximum comfort and relaxation, and in the process they will not get any rest for themselves.

So, after sometime the sage asked them to go and retire for the night. But Lord Ram and Laxman wished to continue doing service to their Guru* and foster-father# as a token of their great respect and thanks for him. It was a noble gesture, having a noble intention, and meant to express the two brothers' gratitude and affection for the sage. So the sage loved this attitude and felt extremely obliged to them. {*The sage taught them the knowledge of weapons and warfare: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8. #King Dasrath had told sage Vishwamitra that henceforth he was the 'father' of the two brothers at the time of handing over them to the sage at Ayodhya: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.}

Since the wise sage realised their intentions, he did not become angry at them that inspite of his telling them to go and sleep so many times, they continued to massage his legs and did not obey him. The wise sage understood that the two brothers are affectionately messaging his legs as a means to serve him with great devotion and sincerity, and to give him personal comfort as much as it possible for them. He also realised that they are expressing their thankfulness and gratitude to him for the love, affection and devotion that he has extended to them just like they would have expected from their own father, king Dasrath, and not letting them feel for a second that they are with some unknown stranger.

Besides this, the sage understood that Lord Ram and Laxman are revering him as their Guru (teacher) because he had imparted to them the knowledge of weapons and warfare while they were on their way from Ayodhya to the hermitage of the sage, and as a devoted disciple they wish to express their thanks to him for teaching them the intricacies of warfare and the skills required in the use of weapons of all kinds, a knowledge that was very essential for princes and which they had not acquired till then.

Any master whom his servant serves with eagerness and sincerity will understand that the former is doing it because he is motivated by his emotions, faithfulness and call of duty befitting a true server who wishes to serve his lord or master to the best of his ability, ensuring that his master gets the best of service and comfort from him, and that no effort is left to please the lord or master. So he will never get annoyed if he finds that the servant is defying his orders while serving him personally.

The message in this incident is clear and sharp: While serving one's Guru or father (parent), there is no harm in doing some extra service even when it is not wanted or asked for, and that if one continues to personally serve the Guru or the father even when the latter asks him to stop and take rest or relax then there is no harm or wrong in continuing the service. This is because the intention is noble and good, and in such a situation the demerit of not obeying the Guru's or father's orders is offset by the immense merit that accumulates by devotedly serving them even beyond the call of formal duty and obligations.

There is one more point to note: When a son or disciple serves his father or Guru, as the case may be, beyond the call of his regular and formal duty, and with the greatest of sincerity and devotion, the father and the Guru feels emotionally overwhelmed by this service and silently blesses the son or the disciple respectively. This blessing is spontaneous and intense; it comes from the deepest recesses of the heart, and therefore its effect is very profound. It stands in sharp contrast to the blessing that is merely formal and more perfunctory in nature.

Indeed, the benefits that the two brothers would reap by this selfless and devoted service to the enlightened great sage who also happened to have become their Guru will be evident soon, the next day itself when Lord Ram will be rewarded by a world-wide fame when he breaks the bow in an assembly attended by all the great kings and princes of the time, especially when all who tried to lift it had failed to move it a fraction of an

inch. Not only this, the Lord will get the hand of Sita in marriage, the prize which all the kings and princes of the world had longed for when they came to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

The icing of the cake would be the marriage of all the brothers of Lord Ram at Janakpur. It will be a token of the sage's thanksgiving and showing his blessings not only for Lord Ram and Laxman alone who had personally served him but also for the whole family of king Dasrath—because for an old father like Dasrath, there is no greater happiness in his old age than seeing his four sons married with four beautiful brides from a family as reputed as his own.]

चापत चरन लखनु उर लाँ । सभय सप्रेम परम सचु पाँ ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि पुनि प्रभु कह सोवहु ताता । पौढ़े धरि उर पद जलजाता ॥ ८ ॥

cāpata carana lakhanu ura lā'ēm̐. sabhaya saprēma parama sacu pā'ēm̐. 7.

puni puni prabhu kaha sōvahu tātā. paurhē dhari ura pada jalajātā. 8.

When Lord Ram went to sleep, Laxman hesitantly held his legs close to his own bosom (“ura lā'ēm̐.”), caressing and messaging (“cāpata carana”) them most affectionately (“saprēma parama”) but with due care not to press them hard because he was afraid that it may cause discomfort to the Lord (“sabhaya sacu pā'ēm̐.”) (7)

The Lord repeatedly asked him (Laxman) to go and sleep (like sage Vishwamitra had done a while ago). Then Laxman lied down, still holding the Lord's holy feet and keeping them on his chest as he lay on the ground. (8)

[Note—The attitude of Laxman exemplifies the highest level of devotion and love that a devotee must have for his Lord God. His gesture of holding Lord Ram's feet close to his heart indicates how much devotion and love and respect he has for them. A person clutches something close to his heart only if it is very dear to him; it's a gesture of great affection for and emotional attachment with that thing.

Remember: It has been observed earlier that Laxman represents a Jiva, a living being, while Lord Ram symbolizes the Supreme Being. Hence, the message here is clear: a Jiva must have the greatest of reverence and devotion for the holy feet of the Supreme Being, and even while the Jiva sleeps he must hold the Lord's holy feet close to his heart.

Another point to note is that Laxman did not actually ‘sleep’ but only lied down for the rest of the night, and even then he kept the Lord's holy feet on his bosom. He was always vigilant to serve Lord Ram, and remained ever alert should the Lord want something or if some harm comes to him.

When the Lord noticed that Laxman is awake and has not fallen asleep—because though he lay on the ground he still clasped the Lord's feet and did not let them off, the Lord repeatedly asked him to let go of his legs, relax himself, and go to sleep. When one falls asleep, it is not practically possible for him to keep clasping something to his bosom with the same grip and vigilance as one does while he is awake. This alerted Lord Ram that Laxman has not gone to sleep because he continued to clasp the Lord's feet to his heart.

This dedication of Laxman for Lord Ram and the Lord's love for him is proved at many places in the story. For instance—(i) At the time of Lord Ram's going to exile, Laxman had clearly told him that as far as he is concerned, all relationships are centered on the Lord, and if the Lord decides to go to the forest for exile there is no reason why he

(Laxman) should remain behind at Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 71—to Doha no. 70. (ii) The mutual love between the two brothers is stunning and exemplary. The relationship between Laxman and Lord Ram was like that of the eye and the eyelid. For the body, eye is the most important organ because without it the world is dark; and for the eye the eyelid is the most important part because the latter is constantly alert to protect at all times. For Laxman, Lord Ram was like the ‘eye’, and Lord Ram cared for Laxman like the ‘eyelid’ cares for the eye. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142. (iii) Laxman served Lord Ram most indulgently like a worldly man is eager to serve his gross body and gratify its urges. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142. (iv) During the Great War at Lanka when Laxman fell unconscious by being hit with an arrow shot by Meghnad, Lord Ram had lamented gravely, saying that without him he will not like to live. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-10 that precedes Doha no. 61.(v) Even during the bow ceremony, when king Janak showed his exasperation by saying that the world has become empty of warriors when no one could break the bow, Laxman became very angry because this meant an insult for Lord Ram. He challenged Janak how he dared to say such a thing in the presence of the Lord, and vowed to turn the earth upside down where his kingdom stood. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.

During the forest exile, when Lord Ram retired for the night, Laxman used to massage and knead his tired legs to give them comfort. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 89.

When Lord Ram and his consort Sita used to go to sleep, Laxman would spend the whole night standing guard to protect them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252

Laxman’s affection for Lord Ram’s holy feet has been lauded by Bharat—the third brother of the Lord who is depicted as a true and exemplary devotee who refused to accept the crown, and instead decided to spend the entire period of the Lord’s forest exile living like a reclusive hermit himself away from the city of Ayodhya—in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.

Laxman kept vigil with an arrow and bow to protect Lord Ram at all times throughout his forest sojourn. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11.]

दो०. उठे लखनु निसि बिगत सुनि अरुनसिखा धुनि कान ।
गुर तें पहिलेहिं जगतपति जागे रामु सुजान ॥ २२६ ॥

dōhā.

uṭhē lakhanu nisi bigata suni arunasikhā dhuni kāna.
gura tēm pahilēhim jagatapati jāgē rāmu sujāna. 226.

Early in the morning, even before sunrise, Laxman got up when he heard the cock crow¹. Lord Ram, the Lord of the world (“Jagat-pati”) and a thorough gentleman who was very wise, knowledgeable and intelligent (“Sujaan”), however woke up a little later but before the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) himself woke up². (Doha no. 226)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 358 which endorses this point that the Lord woke up at dawn when the cock crowed.

²The sage had retired past midnight, and Lord Ram and Laxman still later because they had been serving the sage by messaging his feet. Then the two brothers got up very early; the sage got up before sunrise.

The sage was the first to go to sleep, and the last to wake up. Laxman was the last person to retire and the first to get up. And Lord Ram was the second person to go to sleep and also the second person to wake up.

The sequence tells us ordinary mortals the way we should lead our lives. The senior-most person retires first, while the most junior is the last one to touch bed. This apparently hierarchical structure where the senior-most person not only takes rest before others but is also served by his juniors till he gives them orders to retire is an exemplary example of a well-disciplined society where the elders are given their due respect and honourable place.

This is the law of Dharma—the proper way of treating elders. The teacher and elder should be allowed to take rest first and before his disciple or younger companion. And when the teacher or the elder is given his due share of respect, it is natural that his heart would brim with happiness which will translate into spontaneous blessing for the junior.

Remember: The crowing of the cock clearly indicates that the sage and his group were lodged somewhere in the city itself, because had it been somewhere outside at some place specially earmarked for the incoming guests the chances of the crow being heard at such remote place are almost nil. It will be noted just a little ahead from now that the two brothers had gone to the royal garden of king Janak to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra's worship rituals. This clearly means that the place where they were lodged was very near the royal palace.

Cocks are pet birds, and in ancient times when there were no alarm-clocks they were reared by people to act as Nature's living alarm-bells to tell them that dawn is fast approaching and it is time to get up and be ready for the day.

Cocks were present in inhabited areas such as villages, towns or cities. So therefore, this is the first time Laxman has heard it crow since he left Ayodhya with sage Valmiki.]

चौ०. सकल सौच करि जाइ नहाए । नित्य निबाहि मुनिहि सिर नाए ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sakala sauca kari jā'i nahā'ē. nitya nibāhi munihi sira nā'ē. (1)

After having attended to the routine call of Nature and undertaking all traditional acts of purification, they (Lord Ram and Laxman) took their baths. Then, after finishing their daily routine of offering prayers and formal worship etc. they went to the sage and bowed their heads before him with reverence. (1)

[Note—The daily morning routine of purification and worship involves ablutions and bath, offering of oblations, prayers and a bit of meditation.

Lord Ram always followed all the norms of Dharma. Even when he was a child or had grown up to reach the adolescent age, he used to go and bow respectfully to his parents after waking up every morning when he was at Ayodhya. After that, the Lord

would seek his father's permission and attend to the affairs of the kingdom. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

Following the same noble way of starting his day, he finished his routine personal chores and went to give his respects to sage Vishwamitra who for all practical purposes was his 'father' as well as a 'Guru'.

Later on in the story we shall read that at Chitrakoot, where Bharat had gone in an attempt to persuade Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya from the forest, a similar routine was followed—i.e. the entire assembly did their morning purification rituals and worshipped their respective gods, then Lord Ram went to meet his guru, sage Vasistha. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 290.]

समय जानि गुर आयसु पाई । लेन प्रसून चले दोउ भाई ॥ २ ॥

samaya jāni gura āyasu pā'ī. lēna prasūna calē dō'u bhā'ī. 2.

[The sage needed flowers for his worship rituals. So—] When the time was right, the two brothers got permission from their Guru and took his leave to go out to fetch flowers (so that the sage can do his worship rituals). (2)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman's trip to the royal garden where Sita had also gone to offer worship to the family deity, goddess Parvati, to seek her blessing for a groom most suitable for her, and the subsequent eye-to-eye contact between Sita and Lord Ram which led to the two developing mutual love for each other has also been beautifully described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/71—1/72.

On the face of it this is a simple, straightforward affair—when the sage was ready for his worship formalities, he signaled to the two brothers to go and fetch some flowers. But the phrase “when the time was right” has another mystical connotation to it.

It was the time when all those who do worship require flowers for offering to their deities. Sure enough, it is also the time when Sita would be going to the royal garden to offer her own worship in the royal temple situated there, and would naturally be plucking flowers to be offered to the deity. So, the hint is clear: Lord Ram—“the Lord of the world who was very intelligent and wise” (refer: line no. 2 of Doha no. 226 above)—knew that this is the correct and opportune time to give his divine Darshan (divine glimpse) to Sita to tell her that he has arrived.

Remember: Ram and Sita are not ordinary prince and princess, but Lord Vishnu and his divine consort Laxmi respectively. As we proceed with the story we will read that all the invited kings and princes had failed to move the bow a fraction of an inch, what to talk of lifting and breaking it. This means that Sita's future was doomed as she was to marry someone who could lift, string, and break the bow; this was the condition that her father, king Janak, had set for her marriage. When no one could do it, Janak lamented and said that it is written in Sita's destiny that she will remain unmarried throughout her life. Imagine the intensity of grief, dismay, depression and frustration that would have struck her like a bolt of lightening with this doomed dark fate.

Her only hope lay with Lord Ram—because she had learnt earlier from her friends that the Lord had killed many invincible demons and had provided liberation to Ahilya (sage Gautam's wife). Luckily for her, Lord Ram had yet not approached the bow. So Sita pinned her hope on the Lord.

Therefore, in this context, Lord Ram showing himself to Sita in the royal garden on the pretext of plucking flowers for the sage was a pre-planned affair of the “Lord of the world who was wise, knowledgable and intelligent” to hint to Sita that she need not

worry when everything would seem lost and doomed. The Lord who is famed as the remover of worries of his devotees is here, and if she really and sincerely develops ‘devotion, love, submission’ for him, if she ‘surrenders herself’ to him—then let her be carefree and assured that happiness is all of hers.

This is exactly what had happened. When Sita was submerged in an ocean of misery and gloom, touching the lowest point in her life, she had surrendered herself at the holy feet of Lord Ram and prayed fervently to the Lord, from the deepest recesses of her heart, to save her from a doomed destiny. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.

It was when the Lord realised that Sita’s surrender was absolute and complete, and a slight delay would agonise her further, Lord Ram had instantly lifted and broken the bow with a thunderous roar. It was like a lightening from the sky that ruptured through the dark foreboding cloud of doom, dejection and despair that not only surrounded Sita like a thick fog but also the citizens of Janakpur as well as her parents. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262 (Lord Ram saw Sita’s consternation and extreme sense of misery and urgency, so he breaks the bow, and the people of Janakpur felt very happy); (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 (Janak feels happy and all his grief vanished); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 263 (Sita’s extreme sense of relief and joy); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265 (the jubilation amongst the Gods).

Remember: There are two planes at which we can interpret this story of Ram Charit Manas—one is the gross level of the visible world of matter, senses and material things, and the other plane is the invisible world having a spiritual and devotional dimension. The latter is possible only when we look deep into the hidden meaning of this story with an analytical mind and a penetrating intellect, when we peer behind the curtain as it were, to interpret and understand its profound subtle spiritual and devotional messages. It is the latter approach that will give real joy and contentedness in reading this book, for otherwise it will be rendered without its soul. If we do not see the spiritual and devotional quotient in Ram Charit Manas, and merely interpret events from the physical perspective, then we have missed the nectar and have just read another story like so many other versions of this epic known the world over as simply “Ramayana”. It would be like being contented by merely enjoying the sight of the beauty and diversity of colourful flowers in a garden, but not being like the bee that actually drinks their nectar and derives nourishment as well as intense pleasure from these same flowers.

So, the worldly view of what happens next is straight and simple—a prince visits a garden where the princess has also come to pluck flowers. They see each other. It is love at first sight. They long for each other, but are frustrated by the girl’s father’s vows. Then fate smiles upon them, and eventually they are united in marriage. It’s a fairy-tale ending.

On the other hand, the spiritual view is narrated above in the foregoing paragraphs of this note.]

भूप बागु बर देखेउ जाई । जहँ बसंत रितु रही लोभाई ॥ ३ ॥

bhūpa bāgu bara dēkhē'u jā'ī. jaham̐ basanta ritu rahī lōbhā'ī. 3.

They (Lord Ram and Laxman) went to see the royal garden which was in full bloom and most enchanting as if the spring season was there in its full glory. (3)

[Note—When they went in search of flowers it is natural that they would go to a garden. Being princes it was also natural that they will visit a royal garden, a big garden. By this time every single citizen of Janakpur had come to recognize them. So the royal guards at the garden did not prevent them from entering.]

We can also think in the terms of large public gardens which were maintained by state funds. But in this case it was the king's royal garden—because we shall see shortly that Sita, the daughter of king Janak, too comes here to pluck flowers and offer her worship in the royal shrine dedicated to the deity worshipped by the royal family.

It would obviously be out of bounds for ordinary people, but the guards were aware that Lord Ram and Laxman were special guests of the king because king Janak had personally gone and escorted sage Vishwamitra and his group into the city and lodged them near the royal palace. So they allowed the two brothers access to it.

Since it was a royal garden in the first place, and in the second place hundreds of visitors were expected to come to attend the bow ceremony—so obviously the garden was a matter of prestige for the king, and therefore it was taken special care of and excellently kept.]

लागे बिटप मनोहर नाना । बरन बरन बर बेलि बिताना ॥ ४ ॥

नव पल्लव फल सुमन सुहाए । निज संपति सुर रूख लजाए ॥ ५ ॥

चातक कोकिल कीर चकोरा । कूजत बिहग नटत कल मोरा ॥ ६ ॥

lāgē biṭapa manōhara nānā. barana barana bara bēli bitānā. 4.
nava pallava phala sumana suhā'ē. nija sampati sura rūkha lajā'ē. 5.
cātaka kōkila kīra cakōrā. kūjata bihaga naṭata kala mōrā. 6.

[The following lines describe the garden and its beauty.]

There were many varieties of beautiful trees in the garden. Creepers of different colours and types hung over them in plentiful, forming thick canopies and sheltered areas. (4)

The trees were adorned with fresh leaves, fruits and flowers. Together they put to shame the grandeur and magnificence of the Tree of Gods. (5)

Birds such as Chatak (a special species of cuckoo that drinks only rain water), Cuckoo, Parrot and Chakor (Indian red-legged partridge) were chirping merrily everywhere, while the peacock danced happily. (6)

[Note—Earlier it has already been said that it was as if the spring season was in its full glory in the garden.]

The branches of the tree were bending under the weight of the creepers, fruits and flowers. The creepers were so dense and climbed from one tree to another that they formed a cover over the land beneath. There was greenery all round, and to add charm to the beauty of the garden there were birds of different species and families frolicking around.]

मध्य बाग सरु सोह सुहावा । मनि सोपान बिचित्र बनावा ॥ ७ ॥

बिमल सलिलु सरसिज बहुरंगा । जलखग कूजत गुंजत भृंगा ॥ ८ ॥

madhya bāga saru sōha suhāvā. mani sōpāna bicitra banāvā. 7.
bimala salilu sarasija bahuraṅgā. jalakhaga kūjata gunjata bhṅgā. 8.

In the middle of the garden there was a wonderful pond whose steps were studded with gems and precious stones giving it a fabulous look. (7)

Its water was crystal clean with an abundance of lotus flowers of different colours. Water-birds were happily chirping loudly, and black-bees were buzzing around (the lotus flowers). (8)

[Note—A garden is incomplete without a central water-body. Here it was a pond with steps studded with precious stones. If there land birds in the garden then is naturally expected that there would be water birds in the pond. The water was clean, and the lotus flower is invariably regarded as a jewel of the pond. Wherever there is lotus there would be bees hovering over it in search of nectar. Though the water-birds are not mentioned here but we can visualize a host of such birds—ducks, swans, cranes etc.]

दो०. बागु तड़ागु बिलोकि प्रभु हरषे बंधु समेत ।
परम रज्ज आरामु यहु जो रामहि सुख देत ॥ २२७ ॥

dōhā.

bāgu tarāgu bilōki prabhu haraṣē bandhu samēta.
parama ramya ārāmu yahu jō rāmahi sukha dēta. 227.

Watching the royal garden, Lord Ram felt exhilarated along with his brother. A garden that gives happiness and delight to Lord Ram must have indeed been exceptionally beautiful and charming as well as really worthy of praise and honour as a place that is immensely comfortable and pleasant (because it is not easy to charm the Lord of the world). (Doha no. 227)

[Note—There are a number of instances when we come across places which are regarded as exceptionally beautiful and charming so much so that they give contentedness to the mind and heart to the beholder. For instance—(i) the city of Janakpur had also enchanted Lord Ram and he had felt exhilarated at its beautiful sights—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212; (ii) the site where Lord Ram had consecrated a Shiva's lingam before crossing the ocean to reach Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2; (iii) the hermitage of the great sage Bharadwaj on the banks of river Ganges at Prayag—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 44; and (iv) Mt. Kailash which is the abode of Lord Shiva is also most charming and beautiful—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105.]

चौ०. चहुँ दिसि चितइ पूँछि मालीगन । लगे लेन दल फूल मुदित मन ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

cahum' disī cita'i pūm'chi māligana. lagē lēna dala phūla mudita mana. 1.

(Since they were visiting the royal garden for the first time—) They (Lord Ram and Laxman) looked in all the directions to have a general view of the fascinating garden. Then they took consent of the gardeners and began plucking leaves and flowers with a cheerful mind. 91)

[Note-When anyone enters a new place it is natural for him to look in every direction and take in the general view of the scene. Besides this, the two brothers looked everywhere to decide from where to pluck the flowers which would suit sage Vishwamitra's purpose. After this decision, they searched out the gardeners and sought their permission, explaining to them that they need some flowers and leaves for the purpose of their Guru's worship rituals. Then the two brothers moved in a particular direction where the trees bore flowers of their liking.

It is not good to enter anybody's garden and haughtily start plucking this and that without as much as seeking a formal permission. So the Lord, inspite of being king Janak's special guest, observed etiquette and norms of decency by first requesting permission from the gardeners and then touching any tree.

The brothers felt cheerful because after leaving Ayodhya it was the first time that they have entered a royal garden. The beauty of the garden and its verdant scenery charmed their hearts. Another reason for them feeling happy was that on the excuse of plucking flowers of their choice they would get a chance to see the whole garden, because only after touring it fully can they know which flowers to choose. This will also give them an opportunity to go close to the royal shrine where king Janak's daughter Sita was about to arrive.

The question now arises: How could they guess that Sita would be coming for her worship rituals? Well, they were princes, and they knew the daily routine followed by royal families. Janak was a religious and pious man, and so his daughter is sure to have been taught to offer morning prayers to the family deity. She may be a bit late on other days, but today was a special day as the bow ceremony was scheduled during the day. She had to prepare for it, and clearly she could not afford to be late.

Another reason for the certainty of her coming today for worship in the garden-shrine of the royal family was that she must be very worried about her fate that would be decided today during the bow-breaking ceremony, and therefore would naturally seek the family deity's blessing for good to happen.

See the following verses.]

तेहि अवसर सीता तहँ आई । गिरिजा पूजन जननि पठाई ॥ २ ॥
संग सखीं सब सुभग सयानीं । गावहिं गीत मनोहर बानीं ॥ ३ ॥

tēhi avasara sītā taham' ā'ī. girijā pūjana janani paṭhā'ī. 2.

saṅga sakhīm saba subhaga sayānīm. gāvahīm gīta manōhara bānīm. 3.

At that time (when Lord Ram and Laxman were roaming in the garden, searching flowers of their choice, and plucking them), Sita came inside the garden. She was sent by her

mother (Sunayina) to go and offer her worship to Girija* (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva).¹ (2)

She was accompanied by female friends (companions)# of her age who were pretty and intelligent. They were singing melodious songs suitable for the occasion.² [That is, they were singing devotional songs centered on the theme of requesting goddess Parvati to select a suitable groom for Sita and ensure her future welfare.] (3)

[Note—*The use of the word “Girija” for goddess Parvati is very remarkable here. Girija literally means ‘the daughter of the Mountains’. Parvati was the daughter of the King of Mountains. Mountains, along with saints, trees, rivers and earth, are regarded as the ones who are dedicated to serving others, are always ready to suffer themselves so that others are happy, and are always eager to see that no one suffers because of them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 125.

¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/71, stanza nos. 3-4 also.

Prayers and worship are always done at a certain hour in the morning that is fixed for this purpose in the scriptures. That is why Lord Ram and Laxman were very sure that it is the best opportunity to see Sita and silently assure her that her saviour has arrived. In this context, please see note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227, as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha and is just above the present two verses.

Sita used to worship goddess Parvati daily at this time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 234 where her companions tell her that she must hurry with her worship as they are getting late, and if she wants to spend some more time in the garden then she can do it the next day (i.e. ‘tomorrow’) when they will come here at the same time, obviously for worship of goddess Parvati.

In order to keep any kind of unwarranted, mischievous and scandalous gossip at bay, it is made clear here that it was Sita’s mother who had sent her to the garden to offer worship to Parvati at that hour. So no gossip-monger can now spread the scandalous word that Sita had been alerted by her personal spies that the two princes had gone to the garden, and therefore she actually went there to see the two brothers in private, and that offering of worship to the goddess was just an alibi.

²It is customary to offer special worship to goddess Parvati to seek her blessings by girls who are about to be married. Ordinarily, Sita’s companions would not have sung songs when she came to the shrine for routine worship rituals, but today was special—as today her fate was to be decided. So they were all singing devotional prayers dedicated to Parvati for Sita’s bright and happy future.

On this occasion the would-be bride requests goddess Parvati to bless her with a groom most suitable for her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 228.

It was very important to pray to Parvati to please her and keep her in good humour—because the bow which was to be broken in the day was Lord Shiva’s, and thus no wrong signal should be sent out that the royal family of Janak was insulting Shiva. When Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva, is taken into confidence, and when the bride herself submits her future before the goddess and requests her to ensure her happiness in the best way the goddess thinks, then any chance of wrong interpretation of events is eliminated. Mother Goddess Parvati is always very kind, generous and benevolent, and she herself being a female had experienced the fear of an uncertain future and its accompanying agony and worry that usually overwhelms an unmarried girl. So she is sure to empathise with Sita and understand her problems well. Therefore, Parvati would surely go out of her way to help the bride-to-be in the best possible way, even if that meant breaking of an old rusty bow of her husband Lord Shiva. After all, this bow had no practical use, and if its breaking can make Sita happy then Parvati was all for it. She would tackle her husband,

Lord Shiva, if he shows any sign of annoyance at the breaking of his bow. This is one more reason why Sita was sent by her mother to offer prayers and please goddess Parvati.

#Sita had eight main companions who were her close friends as well. Their names have been given in Agastya Sanhita, Canto 49, verse nos. 5-28. They are the following—Chaarushila, Laxmana, Hema, Kshema, Varaarooha, Padmagandha, Sulochana, and Subhag.]

सर समीप गिरिजा गृह सोहा । बरनि न जाइ देखि मनु मोहा ॥ ४ ॥

sara samīpa girijā gr̥ha sōhā. barani na jā'i dēkhi manu mōhā. 4.

Close to the grand pond in the garden was the shrine dedicated to goddess Girijā (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva). It was so fabulous that it is not possible to describe its beauty and grandeur; it enchanted the mind and the heart of all those who looked at it. (4)

[Note—A shrine is usually located near a water-body. It helps the worshipper to wash him or her self and complete other purifications rituals necessary for formal forms of worship that is offered to a temple deity. There are a number of instances in the Ram Charit Manas itself where this is reiterated—that a shrine is located near a pond or some sort of big water-body. References: (i) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 24 which says that when Lord Ram had sent the monkeys in all the directions in search of Sita, the group led by Angad that also included Hanuman, Lord Ram's trusted messenger, came to a garden where a hermitess was meditating in a shrine located on the bank of a beautiful pond. (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29 where it is said that all along the banks of river Saryu that flowed on the north of Ayodhya, there were many temples, and around them were beautiful gardens.

The deity that was established in the garden where Sita had gone to offer worship was Goddess Parvati, also known as 'Girija' because she is the daughter of the king of mountains. She is the divine consort of Lord Shiva, and the Mother Goddess of creation. This goddess is worshipped by all unmarried girls because it is believed that her blessings help her to secure a sound and happy future.

It is held in tradition that this temple was named 'Chintaamani'—one that removes worries. Sita was very worried about her future because it was tied to Lord Shiva's bow. Her father, king Janak, had declared that she would be married to anyone who would lift, string and break the bow. Now this meant that Sita had no say in choosing her life-partner; anyone who would break the bow would marry her, whether she liked it or not. This filled her with consternation and insecurity about her future and happiness.]

मज्जनु करि सर सखिन्ह समेता । गई मुदित मन गौरि निकेता ॥ ५ ॥

पूजा कीन्हि अधिक अनुरागा । निज अनुरूप सुभग बरु मागा ॥ ६ ॥

majjanu kari sara sakhinha samētā. ga'i mudita mana gauri nikētā. 5.

pūjā kīnhi adhika anurāgā. nija anurūpa subhaga baru māgā. 6.

She (Sita) bathed in the pond along with her female companions. After that, she went cheerfully to the abode (shrine) of Gauri (Goddess Parvati). (5)

She offered worship and prayers to the goddess with great faith, reverence and devotion, asking her to bless her with a handsome and nice groom who is most suitable for her. (6)

[Note—It is very important to worship any god or goddess with great devotion and faith if one expects his or her wishes to be fulfilled. Sita's entire future was to be decided today during the bow ceremony. So she offered the best form of worship and the sincerest form of prayers to Goddess Parvati, requesting her to be pleased with her and bless her with a suitable and compatible groom. Sita had been regularly offering her worship and prayers in this temple for a long time ever since her childhood days, but today was special.

'Bathing' in the context of offering worship in the shrine does not mean either actually pouring water over the whole body as one does during regular bath, or taking a dip in the water of the pond. Bathing before entering a shrine to offer worship and prayer is simply an ablutionary process meant to formally clean oneself in a formal way. It is merely a formality that is observed by sprinkling water on the head and other parts of the body. Sita must have taken her regular bath inside the palace, so taking a 'bath' here before entering the shrine is merely a formal cleaning process done by just sprinkling a little amount of water on her self.

By 'taking a bath' it is implied external purification of the body, and entering the shrine 'cheerfully' implies internal cleansing because only when one is happy internally will he or she be cheerful.

Sita offered her worship and prayers to Goddess Parvati with great devotion, faith and reverence—and that is why, as we shall soon see, the goddess was pleased with her, blessing her that all her wishes would be fulfilled in the way she wants. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 as well as the Chanda that precede Doha no. 236 where the goddess has explicitly told Sita that she honours her wishes, and that she will get the groom she wants as foretold earlier by the celestial sage Narad whose words can never go in vain.

As we progress with our reading we will see that Sita and Lord Ram have seen each other in the garden in the intervening period of Sita completing her purification rituals and her actually entering the building of the temple to offer worship to the goddess. Both of them were enamoured with each other. The Lord's charm was of such an astounding dimension that Sita was swept off her feet, and she longed in her heart that she be married to Lord Ram. With this secret desire in her heart she offered her prayers to Goddess Parvati. Hence, the goddess' assurance that "she will get the groom she desires" assumes significance here—it clearly assured Sita that inspite of some difficult phase in the beginning, she will be finally married to Lord Ram.]

एक सखी सिय संगु बिहाई । गई रही देखन फुलवाई ॥ ७ ॥
तेहिं दोउ बंधु बिलोके जाई । प्रेम बिबस सीता पहिं आई ॥ ८ ॥

ēka sakhī siya saṅgu bihā'ī. ga'ī rahī dēkhana phulavā'ī. 7.
tēhim dō'u bandhu bilōkē jā'ī. prēma bibasa sītā pahim ā'ī. 8.

One of Sita's companions had left her while she was going to the goddess' shrine, and had instead gone in another direction to have a look at the royal garden. (7)

There somewhere close-by she chanced to see the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman who were in the garden plucking flowers for sage Vishwamitra's worship

rituals). She eventually returned back to join Sita, but was overwhelmed with affection and love for the two brothers. (8)

[Note—As is common with young girls, one of Sita's companions had strayed away to have a quick look at the beautiful garden. Perhaps she was not a frequent visitor to the garden like Sita's other friends, so she wanted to make the most of the opportunity and quickly see the fascinating sight of a royal garden while Sita and others performed the worship. All other companions stayed with Sita. Since there were many of them, her absence was not noticed.

As luck would have it, she went in the direction where Lord Ram and Laxman were roaming around plucking flowers and leaves for the sage. This leads us to an intelligent guess—which is: that she was somehow aware that the two brothers were in the garden, and so silently slipped away to have a close glimpse of them. The sight she beheld was stunning—she saw the two beautiful princes walking majestically alone in the garden, smiling and talking with each other in hushed tones, plucking flowers, peering here and there to select the best ones. The sight she saw was a dream-come-true for her; every unmarried adolescent girl of her age would be swept off her feet if she happens to be in her place!

She then rushed back to join her other friends lest any delay would rouse suspicion. After all, Sita was a princess, and if someone complained to her mother, the queen, that such and such girl had been careless and had not attended Sita properly, then the consequences would not be pleasant for her. But the sight of Lord Ram and Laxman had done its magic nonetheless. Though she tried her best to hide her emotional condition, it was impossible for her to do so. Her nervous demeanours, a shy smile, and the thrill that her body experienced betrayed her mind that she was a smitten girl overcome with love and charm for an extremely handsome boy. This will be clear in the next Doha no. 228.]

दो०. तासु दसा देखी सखिन्ह पुलक गात जलु नैन ।
कहु कारनु निज हरष कर पूछहिं सब मृदु बैन ॥ २२८ ॥

dōhā.

tāsu dasā dēkhī sakhinha pulaka gāta jalu naina.
kahu kāranu nija haraṣa kara pūchahim saba mṛdu baina. 228.

All the companions of Sita saw her peculiar condition—she was extremely excited, her body was thrilled, and her eyes were welling-up with tears (of joy).

So, all of them surrounded her, asking her politely, using pleasant words and speaking in a low tone that she tell them the reason for her excitement. (Doha no. 228)

[Note—See note appended to verse nos. 7-8 above.

We will observe here that her excited condition was noticed by Sita's companions, and not by Sita herself. Well, Sita was too occupied with her mental prayers and worrying about her future to pay attention to which of her friends was doing what. She was concentrating upon her worship and meditating upon Goddess Parvati, muttering silent prayers.

Her companions, on the other hand, weren't so much worried. While Sita was involved in silent prayers, they were standing guard and generally enjoying themselves. They were happy that they would be witnessing a great ceremony today. So, when they found that one of them had come from a different part of the garden, suddenly becoming

so overly excited, showing clear signs of someone falling head-over-heels in love, then it is natural that they would want to know the reason. They may have winked mischievously and wickedly smiled at each other, causing this fortunate girl, who had had a divine glimpse of Lord Ram, feel very embarrassed and shy.

The friends spoke to this girl softly in a low tone so as not to disturb Sita. They were polite and used pleasant words so that this girl would open up; otherwise she could have even clammed shut.]

चौ०. देखन बागु कुअँर दुइ आए । बय किसोर सब भाँति सुहाए ॥ १ ॥
स्याम गौर किमि कहौं बखानी । गिरा अनयन नयन बिनु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhana bāgu ku'amra du'i ā'ē. baya kisōra saba bhāmṭi suhā'ē. 1.
syāma gaura kimi kahaurṁ bakhānī. girā anayana nayana binu bānī. 2.

This girl reported—‘Two young princes have come to see the garden. They are of a young age, and pleasant in every possible manner. (1)

One of them is dark complexioned, and other is fair. How can I describe their charm and beauty properly—for the eyes which have seen them can't speak, and voice does not have eyes?’

[That is, the instrument of the body that has actually seen those two wonderful boys, i.e. the eye, can't speak, and the instrument that can actually speak and describe the sight of the two brothers, i.e. the voice, has not actually seen them. So both of them are not competent to describe correctly what I have witnessed.] (2)

[Note—This girl is very clever. She says that the two princes have come to ‘see the garden’ instead of saying that they have ‘come to pluck flowers’. A prince does not go around plucking flowers in some other's garden; hence this statement would have undermined the greatness and the glory of the two brothers. A prince visits a garden to have a causal morning walk in it; not to do such menial job as plucking flowers.

It is also possible that at the time when she saw the two brothers, they were not plucking flowers but merely taking a stroll through the garden. So this girl reported what she saw—‘two princes have come to visit the garden to see it’.

By saying that she cannot describe how bewitchingly beautiful the two brothers looked because the eyes can't speak and the voice can't see, she aroused great curiosity in the heart of others, including Sita, to go and see for themselves a sight that is so fascinating that it cannot be described.]

सुनि हरषीं सब सखीं सयानी । सिय हियँ अति उत्कंठा जानी ॥ ३ ॥

sunī haraṣīṁ saba sakhīṁ sayānī. siya hiyaṁ'ati utakaṇṭhā jānī. 3.

All the clever companions (of Sita) felt exhilarated upon hearing what this girl said. They perceived that this information created an intense longing in the heart of Sita (to see the two wonderful princes described by their friend).

[There is another way of interpreting this Chaupai as follows—The clever companions of Sita heard the news that one of their friends had brought, and felt exhilarated when they observed that this news has also created an intense longing in the heart of Sita to see the two brothers herself.] (3)

[Note—The companions of Sita are called ‘clever’ because they were intelligent enough to perceive even the subtle changes in the mood of the princess. They could observe her behaviour and correctly deduce what she wanted or was thinking about. They weren’t duds and so stupid that they wouldn’t understand emotional signs even if they were obvious. Sita’s parents had selected her companions carefully, and ensured that all of them were intelligent and witty.

So, when the girl who had ventured alone to have a quick look at the garden came back to describe the beauty of two princes and was herself wonderstruck by the sight she saw, it aroused natural curiosity in Sita to go and have a look herself. This is a natural thing with teen-aged boys and girls—when they hear that some handsome and attractive person has come, they would want to see him or her.

Besides this, Sita and others had already heard of the two princes—because when the two brothers went to see Janakpur the previous evening, the news of their fabulous magnetic personality and bewitching beauty had spread like wildfire in the city. So, when Sita heard that they have arrived in the garden, she longed to see them as she had missed the opportunity to see them earlier when they had gone to sight-see the city. This is because Sita’s movements, she being a princess, were restricted to the royal palace, while Lord Ram and Laxman had roamed in the city like commoners, never entering the precincts of the palace. She was eager to see them since yesterday evening, but couldn’t get a chance. Here was a wonderful opportunity, so she was excited about it.

If the news that there are two wonderful boys roaming in the garden had annoyed Sita for some reason, such as her getting angry at the gardeners as to why they had allowed outsiders to enter the royal garden when she was there when all outsiders were strictly prohibited, her companions would have behaved differently. They would have hushed the girl who brought the news, and would have escorted Sita quickly inside the temple building so that she did not actually see the two princes if by chance the latter came wandering in that direction. But as it happened, Sita’s companions found that she was herself eager to see the two princes. This made them excited—because, for one, they would themselves get to see Lord Ram and Laxman at close quarters, and second, the girl who had strayed away from the group as well as the attendants of the garden would not be punished when the matter was reported by Sita to her mother, the queen.

If Sita hadn’t taken this bit of information about the two unknown princes wandering in her garden, she could have severely punished the gardeners. She could have also punished the girl for leaving her attendence and going elsewhere when she was supposed to stay with her.]

एक कहइ नृपसुत तेइ आली । सुने जे मुनि सँग आए काली ॥ ४ ॥

जिन्ह निज रूप मोहनी डारी । कीन्हे स्वबस नगर नर नारी ॥ ५ ॥

बरनत छबि जहँ तहँ सब लोगू । अवसि देखिअहिं देखन जोगू ॥ ६ ॥

ēka kaha'i nṛpasuta tē'i ālī. sunē jē muni saṁga ā'ē kālī. 4.

jinha nija rūpa mōhanī ḍārī. kīnhē svabasa nagara nara nārī. 5.

baranata chabi jaham̐ taham̐ saba lōgū. avasi dēkhi'ahim̐ dēkhana jōgū. 6.

(When Sita politely enquired about who these two princes were—) One of the companions said—‘Oh dear! They must be the two young princes about whom I have heard* that they have come yesterday with the sage (Vishwamitra). (4)

They have enchanted and captivated the heart and mind of all the citizens of the city, both the men as well as the women, by casting the net of their wonderful charm and magnetic personality on them. (5)

Indeed, all the men and women folk are talking here and there, everywhere, about the magnificence of their beautiful forms, and hence we must see them as they are worthy of seeing.’ (6)

[Note—*The word ‘heard’ is significant here. It means that the friend of Sita who is speaking has not seen Lord Ram and Laxman personally when the two brothers had gone out to see the city of Janakpur the previous evening. This is because the group of girls who had accompanied Sita to the royal garden consisted of her close attendants who used to stay with Sita all the time in the palace. They didn’t have the chance to see the two brothers like other women-folk of the city.

But nevertheless they all had heard of the two wonderful boys. So when one of them who had sneaked away surreptitiously to see if she can see them somewhere in the garden, because somehow the news had leaked that the princes had gone to the royal garden to pluck flowers, and was dumbstruck and smitten when she actually saw Lord Ram and Laxman roaming there, that when she returned to join her companions her demeanours convinced others in the group that the two boys about whom she was talking must surely be the ones about whom the entire city was abuzz. Her excitement and exhilaration were clinching evidence that Lord Ram and Laxman were indeed in the vicinity.

Sita hadn’t expressed her desire to see the two brothers in explicit terms, but the more intelligent among her companions had realised that secretly she does want to see the two young princes. To ascertain whether Sita had correctly guessed who the two princes were whom she wants to see, this wise friend cleared all doubts by saying that they were the ones who had come with sage Vishwamitra the previous day.

To remove any hesitation in the mind of Sita as to whether or not she should go and see them, this friend went a step ahead to comment that the entire city was talking of their charm and magnificence, and hence it is worthwhile to see them.

By saying that the charm of the two brothers have captivated the mind and heart of all the citizens of Janakpur, this clever friend also subtly defends her companion by implying that if the entire city is enthralled by the sight of the two princes then it is no wonder that this girl was also wonderstruck and swept off her feet when she saw the two brothers. It is not her fault, and therefore she should be excused.

Whatever doubts Sita may have had in her mind were removed by this positive assertion of her senior friends. Sita also realised that not only she but all her other companions too were very eager to have a glimpse of the princes. Therefore she was sure that the chances of anyone disclosing this secret encounter to the queen or any other member of the royal household were nil.

Everyone in the city has seen the two brothers, so there is no harm in their seeing them. This means that even if this secret viewing is reported to the queen, the companions would defend Sita together by asserting that they too had wanted to see the two princes, and that Sita was not alone when she saw them. In fact, they would say that it was on their insistence that Sita went to have a quick glimpse of the two brothers.]

तासु बचन अति सियहि सोहाने । दरस लागि लोचन अकुलाने ॥ ७ ॥
चली अग्र करि प्रिय सखि सोई । प्रीति पुरातन लखइ न कोई ॥ ८ ॥

tāsu bacana ati siyahi sōhānē. darasa lāgi lōcana akulānē. 7.
calī agra kari priya sakhi sō'ī. prīti purātana lakha'i na kō'ī. 8.

Sita liked her words very much (as she was herself interested and eager to view the two brothers). Her eyes became eager to have a 'Darshan' (a divine viewing) of the two brothers¹. (7)

She made the friend (who had brought the news of the two brothers roaming in the garden) lead them². No one could perceive or discern the eternal bond of affection and love that existed subtly between Sita and Lord Ram since time immemorial³. (8)

[Note—¹The word "Darshan" has a divine and pure connotation. It means a holy viewing, a view of someone immaculate and divine. For instance we say we go to a temple to have a 'Darshan' of the deity installed there, or to have a 'Darshan' of some holy man. The use of the word precludes any kind of negative meaning or interpretation in viewing something or someone. Hence, Sita and her other companions had no pervert intention in feeling eager to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram and Laxman. It was a call of the heart; it was the purest form of desire with no perversion and negativity attached to it as the world of today might take it to be because it is driven by a corrupt mind that is always inclined to see things in the wrong light.

The puity of Sita's desire to see Lord Ram will be clear in the paragraphs that follow.

²Obviously, the girl who had brought the news of Lord Ram and Laxman knew where they were in the garden and so she was told to lead others to that spot.

From the spiritual perspective we can say that someone who has witnessed the Lord or has experienced his presence is the only one who is competent to show the way to the Lord to the rest of the society. This is the importance of a true Guru (spiritual preceptor and guide) and the role that he plays.

³The world saw Sita as a princess of Janakpur, and Lord Ram as the prince of Ayodhya. The world—except the few enlightened sages and seers—did not realise that Lord Ram was Vishnu, the Supreme Being, incarnated, and Sita was Vishnu's divine consort known as Laxmi. At a higher and subtler level, Vishnu was none else but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and Laxmi was his Shakti, his dynamic energy that looks after this creation and ensures its well-being and comfort.

Since Lord Vishnu had to come down to this mortal world to fulfill the desire of the Gods and eliminate the demons, some worldly way had to be devised to unite the Lord with his cosmic Shakti, i.e. with Laxmi who was now in the form of Sita. Hence, it was so planned and devised by the Creator that the two would meet and unite by way of marriage, the method prescribed for a life-time union between two individuals by the Creator himself. By adopting this method of union, the laws of creation as laid down by the Creator would be followed. Lord Vishnu is an upholder of the laws of Dharma, and therefore he must follow them himself in order to ask others in this world to obey them.

This eternal bond between Lord Vishnu and Laxmi is what is cited here when it is asserted that "no one could perceive or discern the eternal bond of affection and love that existed subtly between Sita and Lord Ram since time immemorial".]

दो0. सुमिरि सीय नारद बचन उपजी प्रीति पुनीत ।

चकित बिलोकति सकल दिसि जनु सिसु मृगी सभित ॥ २२९ ॥

dōhā.

sumiri sīya nārada bacana upajī prīti punīta.

cakita bilōkati sakala disi janu sisu mgi sabhita. 229.

Sita recalled the words of Narad (the celestial sage), and this inspired love of the purest and the most innocent kind in her heart (for her eternal Lord Vishnu who had manifested in the form of Sri Ram). She began to look here and there in a stunned manner like a startled fawn. (Doha no. 229)

[Note—Sita suddenly realised that her eternal Lord Vishnu has come to meet her. She recalled the words of sage Narad when he had prophesised during her early childhood days that she will be meeting her future husband in the garden where the shrine of Goddess Parvati is located. So when one of her friends brought the news of Lord Ram and Laxman paying a visit to the garden on the eve of her marriage, Sita suddenly remembered Narad's words and was convinced that the prince whom she is destined to marry is here in the garden—because Narad's words can't go in vain. She decided to see who he is.

She was stunned like a fawn because ever since she had entered the garden she was secretly but eagerly looking in every direction to have a glimpse of someone about whom sage Narad had foretold her, but couldn't see anyone around. When her friend told her that the two wonderful princes were inside the garden, Sita was wonderstruck and looked carefully again if she had missed seeing them. She was understandably nervous and emotional, and her eyes and ears both stood on the edge to catch the slightest hint of the two princes' presence nearby.

Her condition at that time is compared to a nervous fawn whose ears stand erect and eyes look anxiously here and there for the slightest sound or movement in the bushes or amongst the trees for an unexpected stranger who may be seeing it secretly. The similarity has an important parallel: like the fawn who is afraid of a hunter who might kill it secretly, Sita was anxious because the sight of Lord Ram would compel her to fall in love with the Lord and wish that she marry him but the stern vows of her father—that she would be married to anyone who breaks the bow—would kill her desires and future happiness.

Narad's words are never false—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 236. So, when Sita remembered Narad's words she was convinced that her future husband in here in the garden, and this bit of prophesy motivated her to have a sneak view of who he is!]

चौ०. कंकन किंकिनि नूपुर धुनि सुनि । कहत लखन सन रामु हृदयँ गुनि ॥ १ ॥

मानहुँ मदन दुंदुभी दीन्ही । मनसा बिस्व बिजय कहँ कीन्ही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kañkana kiñkini nūpura dhuni suni. kahata lakhana sana rāmu hdayam̐guni. 1.
mānahum̐ madana dundubhī dīnhī. manasā bisva bijaya kaham̐ kīnhī. 2.

Hearing the tinkling and chiming of small bells attached to the wrist-bands ('kañkana'; bangles), the waist-bands (kiñkini) and the anklets (nūpura) worn by the maidens, Lord Ram thought over the matter in his heart and then said to Laxman—(1) 'It appears to me that Kamdeo (cupid; the god of love and passions) has sounded his kettle-drum (to announce to the world that love has made a firm presence in the heart of Lord Ram and Sita). He seems intent to conquer the world.' (2)

[Note—Earlier there was complete silence in the garden at the place where the two brothers were plucking flowers and leaves. Lord Ram and Laxman were concentrating upon picking flowers for their Guru's worship ritual. Suddenly this silence was disrupted by the chiming sound of small bells tied to the ornaments worn by Sita and her companions when they arrived at the site.

Lord Ram is of an adolescent age, and so when he heard this sound he immediately guessed that some young girls are near-by, because, being a prince, he was well aware of such sounds. He had been hearing such tinkling and chiming of small bells attached to bangles, waist-bands and anklets of female attendants of the royal palace at Ayodhya; the sound was not new to him. So he immediately correctly deduced that some young girls were in the vicinity.

When a group of love-struck young girls of an adolescent age go to secretly peep at two young and handsome boys roaming freely in a garden, it is natural that they would be excited, giggling, chuckling and chattering along in hushed tones. The general atmosphere that is being created here by this narration, especially with the background of a wonderful garden where young girls meet young boys, is that of love and passion. This is confirmed by the statement that Lord Ram told Laxman that it appears that Kaam-deo cupid, the God of love, passion, longing and attraction, has sounded the bugle to conquer the world.

Why 'conquer the world'? It is because Lord Ram is not an ordinary human prince but a human form of the Supreme Being himself. By endeavouring to conquer the heart of Lord Ram, Kaam-deo is intent on conquering the world because the Sri Ram is the supreme Lord of the world. When a king gets ready for battle, his army sounds its war trumpet or bugle. Here, the sound of the tiny bells attached to the ornaments of Sita and her companions is compared to this war trumpet or bugle. Sita is the sovereign and is likened to Kaam-deo cupid, and her army consists of the maidens who accompany her. They have set out to conquer the heart of the Lord of the world, i.e. Lord Ram. Hence, it is said that "Kaam-deo cupid has sounded the bugle to conquer the world".

In spite of his reluctance to enter into any confrontation with Kaam-deo cupid, Lord Ram is forced to face the latter and his powerful forces as he is now alone in the garden, is yet to complete the task of collecting flowers for his Guru, and therefore can't leave the garden in a hurry to escape Kaam-deo's assault. This is why it is said that "he thought over the matter in his heart". The Lord was contemplating what to do.

Remember: the emotions of love, passions, longing and attraction, and the sentimentality attached to them, have their seat in the 'heart' and not the 'mind' where logic, wisdom and intellect have their seat.

This interaction between Lord Ram and Sita highlights the natural phenomena of development of love and passion in young persons. It's a part of Nature; it's an integral

aspect of the process of creation. It helps the Creator to maintain the momentum of the cycle creation and development that he has set rolling.

Lord Ram's heart is as pure and incorruptible as the lotus flower. No amount of passionate enticements or worldly allurements can make him feel aroused or think perversely in any manner whatsoever. This is proved when he tells his younger brother Laxman what he thought of upon hearing the sound of the bells attached to the ornaments of the girls. Normally an elder brother would not discuss such emotional matters of the heart with his younger sibling; it is against norms of proper conduct and ethics. After all, Laxman was not Lord Ram's friend with whom such things can be shared.

The incorruptible nature of Lord Ram's character will be proved once again and settled once and for all a little later when he goes back to sage Vishwamitra and tells him everything that happened in the garden. Now well, can anyone imagine a young boy telling his elderly Guru that he has met some pretty young girls secretly in a secluded place in a garden, and that he was bitten by the love-bug? That Lord Ram did this establishes beyond doubt that the Lord was above and beyond such lowly thoughts, that his character could not be sullied by worldly muck, and that he was merely acting out his role as a human being though internally his mind and heart were neutral as they were expected to be from the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 237.]

अस कहि फिरि चितए तेहि ओरा । सिय मुख ससि भए नयन चकोरा ॥ ३ ॥
भए बिलोचन चारु अचंचल । मनहुँ सकुचि निमि तजे दिगंचल ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi phiri cita'ē tēhi ōrā. siya mukha sasi bha'ē nayana cakōrā. 3.
bha'ē bilōcana cāru acañcala. manahum̐ sakuci nimi tajē digañcala. 4.

Saying this (to Laxman), he (Lord Ram) looked in the direction from where the sound of tinkling came. As soon as he saw the face of Sita, his eyes behaved like the famous bird known as Chakor that gazes at the full moon without blinking¹. (3)

His enchanted eyes became immobile (i.e. they were fixed on the face of Sita) as if Nimi (the god who controls blinking of the eyelids) has left the eyelids out of shyness². (4)*

[Note—¹Here, Sita's beautiful face is compared to the full moon, and Lord Ram's eyes to the bird Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge. This bird is famous for its love for the moon. As soon as the full moon rises on the horizon, the Chakor starts staring at it unblinkingly. It fixes its gaze on the moon's disc with such concentration that as the moon travels across the sky the bird also tilts its head accordingly so as to ensure that it continues to gaze at the moon.

A Chakor looks at the moon, and not vice versa. It means that it was Lord Ram who was staring at Sita's face, and not the other way round. This is in accordance to the norms of proper conduct and ethical behaviour in society whereby a girl is not expected to stare at the face of boys or any male for that matter, even if he is related to her, during their first meeting. Sita would glance at Sri Ram's face, but it would be a quick look and not a stare. A little later, however, she would gather enough courage to have a full view of the handsome face of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 232; and (ii) Doha no. 234 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 3.

²A person's eyelids have a natural tendency to blink at regular intervals, but when one is highly astonished at a sight his eyes stop blinking; he begins to stare at the object. When Lord Ram saw the beautiful face of Sita, his eyes were so fixed on it that for a few moments they did not blink. This is a poetic way of saying that the Lord was struck by the bewitching beauty of Sita's face and momentarily he forgot about everything else. He was dazed and dumbstruck, becoming immobile and speechless. The same thing has happened with Sita a little later. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 232.

*A very important thing is to be observed during this interaction between Lord Ram and Sita in the garden. When the Lord looks at Sita, she is not looking back at him directly in the eye, and when she looks at the Lord he is not staring back at her in the eye. They look at each other's faces, but not directly in the eye. This implies that principles of good manners and proper conduct are being observed by them: a girl and a boy who are strangers are not expected to stare each other in the eye and make direct eye contact. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231 which describe how Lord Ram conducted himself, and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 234 which describe Sita's conduct.

It is only after they are married that they look directly at each other—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 3 of Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

देखि सीय सोभा सुख पावा । हृदयँ सराहत बचनु न आवा ॥ ५ ॥
जनु बिरंचि सब निज निपुनाई । बिरचि बिस्व कहँ प्रगटि देखाई ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhi sīya sōbhā sukhu pāvā. hdayam̐ sarāhata bacanu na āvā. 5.
janu biran̐ci saba nija nipunāī. biraci bisva kham̐ pragaṭi dēkhāī. 6.

He (Lord Ram) felt contented and happy when he saw the magnificent beauty of Sita. He praised it silently in his heart but was so dumbfounded that he could not find words to express his wonder and describe it or praise it in specific terms. (5)

It appeared that the creator Brahma has moulded the fabulous image of Sita to show the world his entire expertise at craftsmanship, of how beautifully and expertly he can create. (6)

[Note—Lord Ram's only companion here is Laxman. So though the Lord wants to say something to him about Sita's beauty, he is so stunned that words elude him and he could not speak for some moments.

Brahma is the creator of the world as well as Nature with its fascinating array of beautiful and awe-inspiring wonderful sights. Sita looks so fabulously beautiful that it appears that the Creator has taken great trouble and time to give shape to her beautiful form as a sample of his expertise as an expert artisan or craftsman. Brahma has demonstrated to the world how wonderfully he can create, and has put on display his skillful art of creation of beautiful forms at their best.

It has already been said that Lord Ram's eyes have transformed themselves into a Chakor, and Sita's face is like the full moon. Just like the Chakor deriving immense satisfaction by looking at the disc of the full moon, Sri Ram too derived immense satisfaction by looking at the face of Sita.]

सुंदरता कहूँ सुंदर करई । छबिगृहँ दीपसिखा जनु बरई ॥ ७ ॥
सब उपमा कबि रहे जुठारी । केहिं पटतरौं बिदेहकुमारी ॥ ८ ॥

sundaratā kahum̃ sundara kara'ī. chabigr̥ham̃ dīpasikhā janu bara'ī. 7.
saba upamā kabi rahē juṭhārī. kēhiṁ paṭataraur̃ bidēhakumārī. 8.

She (Sita) lends the virtue of 'beauty' its inherent quality of being beautiful. It is like the case of the flame of wonderful lamp lighting the house of magnificence and beauty. (7)

The similes that the poets usually use to describe such virtues as beauty, magnificence and glamour have become stale and outdated. So say with what should I compare the daughter of Videha (i.e. Sita) with? (8)

[Note—A lamp looks beautiful when its flame burns brightly without giving any smoke or depositing any soot. Sita's face is spotless and radiant like this lamp and its brilliant light. 'Beauty' is a subtle quality that makes things look 'beautiful' by the virtue of its presence in them. Sita's 'beauty' is this quality that is pure and wholesome. Whatever comes in contact with Sita, whatever is associated with Sita would become 'beautiful'.

Sita is surrounded by many girls of her age and beauty. She is in the center of the group. Hence, the metaphor of the flame lighting the house of beauty is used to describe this scene: the beautiful companions surrounding Sita are likened to the walls of a magnificent house, while Sita herself is compared to the brilliant flame of a magnificent lamp burning in the center of this house. It is the lighted lamp that gives light to the otherwise dark walls of the house. If the lamp was not lighted and there was darkness, no one would be able to see how beautiful the house is. The credit of making the house look beautiful goes to the light of the lamp. The centrally placed lamp cannot miss attention even if one does not pay careful attention to finer details of the house. So is the case with Sita here: she stands out amongst all the girls in the group because of her unique charm and beauty though all of the girls accompanying her are beautiful in their own right.

Since all metaphors and similes have already been used by poets and bards on one or the other occasion they are deemed to be stale and outdated. Tulsidas says that even Lord Ram failed to find something new with which to compare the beauty of Sita with. A similar idea is expressed a little later in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 247 when an attempt is being made to give an idea of how wonderful Sita looks as she comes to the venue of the marriage ceremony to get married to Lord Ram.]

दो०. सिय सोभा हियँ बरनि प्रभु आपनि दसा बिचारि ।
बोले सुचि मन अनुज सन बचन समय अनुहारि ॥ २३० ॥

dōhā.

siya sōbhā hiyam̃ barani prabhu āpani dasā bicāri.
bōlē suci mana anuja sana bacana samaya anuhāri. 230.

Describing to himself the prettiness of Sita and reflecting on his own condition, Lord Ram spoke to his younger brother (Laxman) words that were appropriate to the occasion,

and were spoken with an innocent heart that was free from any sort of impure thoughts. (Doha no. 230)

[Note—This Doha is significant in the sense that it removes, in one stroke, any chance of the reader harbouring any sort of doubt about Lord Ram's character and innocence because the situation is such that it may breed reservations about the immaculate nature of the character of both the brothers. It is a lovely garden; a young boy meets a young girl, and both are smitten by each other. But this attraction is not of a worldly plain but of a divine nature. There is no pervert thought in the mind of any of the characters—neither of Sita nor of Lord Ram.

Remember: True love is always free from passions and lust; it is pure nectar effusing from the lotus-like heart, and is not a fermented liquid that produces hallucinations and delusions. It's a vibration of the heart, and two souls get attracted towards each other only when this vibration matches, and not otherwise. To draw a parallel with ordinary life as we know it, a radio receiver can tune into a particular broadcasting station only when it is tuned correctly to it, and not otherwise. Hence, when two souls whose frequency match each other meet, they are said to fall in love with each other, which in simple terms mean that the vibrations of their heart have matched. We meet thousands of people in our lives, but do we truly fall in love with them in an honest manner?

Lord Ram is not an ordinary mortal but Lord Vishnu, and Sita is his eternal divine consort, Goddess Laxmi.

Lord Ram's innocence is proved by his sharing his thoughts with his younger brother. Think of this: would he have done so had some evil element crept in his mind and heart? One does not share one's vile and evil thoughts with his younger brother. Lord Ram could have kept quiet and hidden everything from Laxman. But that would have given the naughty world ever on the lookout for some opportunity to cast aspersions on other people's character a chance to murmur doubts that the Lord is harbouring some wrong thoughts in his heart and mind. So he decided to come clean and divulge his thoughts directly to Laxman to keep the gossip-mongers at bay.

We shall read below in the following Chaupais that Lord Ram has himself confided to Laxman his emotional condition after he has seen Sita's transcendental beauty. The Lord wonders why it is so, for he himself does not know how his heart, which is supposed to be calm and neutral, has suddenly become so nervous and agitated. The answer lies in the explanations given in the foregoing paragraphs of this note.]

चौ०. तात जनकतनया यह सोई । धनुषजग्य जेहि कारन होई ॥ १ ॥
पूजन गौरि सखीं लै आई । करत प्रकासु फिरइ फुलवाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

tāta janakatanayā yaha sō'ī. dhanuṣajagya jēhi kārana hō'ī. 1.
pūjana gauri sakhī'm lai ā'īm. karata prakāsu phira'i phulavā'īm. 2.

Lord Ram told Laxman—‘Dear brother, this is the daughter of king Janak. It is because of her that the bow-breaking ceremony is being held. (1)

Her female friends have brought her to offer worship to Goddess Gauri (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva)¹*. She# is moving in the garden, illuminating¹ it with her presence. (2)

[Verse no. 2 can be read as follows also: *She (Sita) has come here to offer worship to Goddess Gauri, and she has brought along her female friends with her. #They are roaming in the garden, illuminating it with their charm and beauty.]

[Note—Earlier we have read in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 229 that Sita was told of the presence of the two brothers by her friends. Now, it is Sri Ram telling Laxman about her.

A remarkable point is to be noted here: One of the friends of Sita had told her that she has heard about the two princes who have come with sage Vishwamitra and who have charmed the entire city of Janakpur by their presence. There were thousands of invited kings and princes who had assembled at Janakpur to participate in the bow ceremony, but none of them could catch the attention of the people of Janakpur, let alone captivate their hearts and minds as Lord Ram and Laxman had done. So they were special. Now, Sita's beauty is so unique and matchless that it has caught the imagination of Lord Ram, and she stands out in the group of young girls of her age who are all beautiful. It is a royal garden, and a princess is not an ordinary girl of the city. It was a royal garden, and the shrine of the Goddess was the royal family's personal place of worship. To this was added the aura of royalty, majesty and grandeur surrounding Sita that marked her out distinctively, and it was not difficult for Lord Ram to correctly guess who she is.

Ram had roamed in the city and had seen the venue of the bow ceremony himself. He must also have heard the echo of the people talking with each other that he is the proper groom for Sita, and that they all hoped that this union is made. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 223. Therefore it is obvious for Lord Ram that the girl who is the center of attention is no one else but princess Sita.

¹The place of meeting is in the vicinity of the temple of the Goddess. It is customary that a girl worships Goddess Parvati on the eve of her marriage, praying to the goddess for a groom who is most suitable for her. Sita and her companions were holding in their hands all things necessary for offering worship in a temple, so it was not difficult for Lord Ram to guess that Sita has come to the temple to worship Parvati, especially in the background of the forthcoming bow-breaking ceremony which was to be held soon.

²“Illuminating the garden with her presence”—It has been said earlier (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 230) that Sita was like a flame that illuminates the house of beauty. So this statement of Lord Ram sort of endorses it. The royal garden is beautiful in its own right, but Sita's presence added glamour and magnificence to it.]

जासु बिलोकि अलौकिक सोभा । सहज पुनीत मोर मनु छोभा ॥ ३ ॥

सो सबु कारन जान बिधाता । फरकहिं सुभद अंग सुनु भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu bilōki alaukika sōbhā. sahaja punīta mōra manu chōbhā. 3.
sō sabu kārana jāna bidhātā. pharakahim subhada aṅga sunu bhrātā. 4.

By seeing her transcendental beauty¹, my Mana (heart and mind), which is always calm, pure and incorruptible, has become restless. (3)

Oh brother, listen²! Only God can know the reason, but my right limbs are fluttering, and this portends some good in the future³. (4)

[Note—¹Sita's beauty is not ordinary. Had it been so it would not have had any effect on Lord Ram who is the transcendental Lord of creation in a manifested form. Surely therefore Sita's beauty must also have a transcendental dimension to it in order to move the Mana (mind and heart) of the Lord of creation. A weak magnet cannot pull a stronger magnet to itself; both Ram and Sita are equally powerful because whereas Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Sita is a manifested form of Laxmi, Vishnu's divine consort.

Who can match Laxmi in physical beauty as it is she who has also revealed herself in the form of Mother Nature which is so fantastically pretty, grand and fabulous that poets and artists have been attempting to depict Nature's magnificence and stupendous beauty ever since the dawn of civilization but have yet to find a satisfactory description.

²Laxman kept quiet without showing any reaction while Lord Ram was telling him how he felt. So the Lord wondered whether or not he was paying attention to him. So he said "listen brother; pay attention to me".

³It is traditionally believed that if the organs of a man's right side of the body, such as his eyelids, hands and legs, begin to flutter then it is a sign of some good future for him. In the case of a woman, it is the opposite side of the body, i.e. her left side that bears the same meaning. It is an omen.

So, inspite of Lord Ram's heart becoming restless, the fluttering of the right side of his body indicated to him that something good is about to happen in the near future. When we put two and two together, like Ram's heart and mind being enamoured at the first sight of Sita and he being attracted to her, his Mana becoming restless and his right organs fluttering at the same time, the omen becomes clear: that the chances of Ram and Sita coming together permanently are quite good.

He also means that worldly beauty that is only superficial in nature would have no effect on him. But the beauty of Sita has a transcendental dimension; it goes deeper than merely being exterior. Lord Ram's Mana, which is inherently and eternally neutral and calm, does not get easily disturbed, and if it has got restless then there must be something sublime and subtle, something serious to make this happen. That his Mana has become restless by the mere sight of Sita signifies that there is more to it than what meets the eye because Lord Ram has full control over his Mana, and is strong willed. This translates to the conclusion that Sita's relationship with Lord Ram is eternal, existing since time immemorial, and it has a sublime and transcendental dimension to it. Hitherto it was concealed, but now it has come out in the open. It is like the case of a seed concealing a giant tree within its own self, and when the time comes the tree sprouts and grows to make itself visible to the world.]

रघुबंसिन्ह कर सहज सुभाऊ । मनु कुपंथ पगु धरइ न काऊ ॥ ५ ॥
मोहि अतिसय प्रतीति मन केरी । जेहिं सपनेहुँ परनारि न हेरी ॥ ६ ॥

raghubansinha kara sahaja subhā'ū. manu kupantha pagu dhara'i na kā'ū. 5.
mōhi atisaya pratīti mana kērī. jēhim sapanēhum' paranāri na hērī. 6.

It is a natural noble trait of all the members of king Raghu's dynasty that they never allow their Mana (heart and mind) to step on any evil path (i.e. they never allow wrong and impure thoughts to enter and pollute their mind and heart)¹. (5)

As far as I am concerned, I am so confident about my Mana that it has never allowed itself to ever set its eye on or think about someone else's wife². (6)

[Note—¹To think of another woman who is not related to one in any manner is deemed a wrong thought for the mind, and it is a worse thing to get attracted to her, praise her beauty and feel emotionally upset at her sight. It is not a good character in a man. This is why Ram is giving this clarification to remove any doubts in the mind of Laxman that his elder brother is transgressing limits of proper conduct.

Members of king Raghu's race are so careful so as not to even think of a wrong path, let alone walking on it. So it is out of the question that Ram, who also belongs to this noble race of kings, would ever imagine of doing it.

²Sri Ram goes further to assert that he is especially very diligent in exercising control over his Mana. And therefore there surely must be something very serious and beyond explanation, something that is hidden from view and is transcendental that has made him restless and loose control over his Mana. That is why he has said earlier that "only God knows the reason" because he is unable to find any plausible reason for his emotional condition.

Sri Ram had to make this clear because just now he has told Laxman that his heart and mind seem to be upset and agitated at the sight of Sita, and if he did not clarify and elaborate it would be easy to cast aspersions on his immaculate character and pure heart. Sita's future husband is yet not decided, and for all practical purposes she is like a complete stranger for Ram at this moment. Eyeing a woman who may be married to someone else during the day is obviously a wrong thing to do. Lord Ram belongs to a noble race of kings who were very careful in their thoughts and conduct. So it is unimaginable for him to allow pervert thoughts to enter his mind. That is why he wonders why this is happening; why he is so attracted to Sita.]

जिन्ह कै लहहिं न रिपु रन पीठी । नहिं पावहिं परतिय मनु डीठी ॥ ७ ॥

मंगन लहहिं न जिन्ह कै नाहीं । ते नरबर थोरे जग माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

jinha kai lahaḥim̐ na ripu rana pīṭhī. nahim̐ pāvahim̐ paratiya manu ḍīṭhī. 7.
maṅgana lahaḥim̐ na jinha kai nāhīm̐. tē narabara thōrē jaga māhīm̐. 8.

It is rare to find a noble man in this world who would never turn his back on the enemy during a battle (and run away from the battle-field), who never gives his heart to another woman who is not his wife, or even cast any sort of amorous glances at her or harbour any lust for her, and from whom no beggar (or alms seeker) gets a rebuke (and turned away without getting anything).' (7-8)

[Note—It ought to be noted while reading this book titled "Ram Charit Manas" that besides telling the story of Lord Ram, his time and the deeds done by him, this book incorporates in its texture great principles of noble conduct, polity, behavioural science, spirituality, metaphysics, theology and the like.

In these two lines we see three outstanding characters of noble men: (i) They are brave and full of courage and valour; they would not show cowardice in the face of the enemy by running away from the battle-field. This is a prime character of a warrior. (ii) They will not develop extra-marital relationships; this ensures maintenance of ethics and morality in the society. If the parent is pervert and lustful, the children of the society can't be expected to lead a moral life. (iii) They will always ensure that if anyone comes to them seeking help and alms then they will do their best to help the seeker. Setting aside

some part of one's income for charitable purposes and helping those who are less fortunate is a moral duty ordained by all religions.

Now, what Ram means here is this: He belongs to a highly respected noble race of kings, known as the Raghu Dynasty. Their characteristic has already been mentioned—that they never step on a wrong path and they never harbour any amorous designs on other women. So how it is ever possible that he (Ram) would violate this well honoured and hoary tradition of his ancestors?

In spite of these restrictions, he has developed some sort of attraction for Sita. Why is it so? This tricky question is answered in a very interesting way in these two lines. Let us now examine how.

Lord Ram says that such noble men do not run away from the enemy, and they do not turn away someone who begs something from them. Now, here is the interesting part:--

(i) Firstly, Kamdeo (cupid) has arrived in the form of Sita to attack Lord Ram, to overcome his control over his self, so the Lord simply can't run away from this assault! That would be ignoble for him. So he decided to face Kaam-deo cupid. That is why he did not turn away from Sita and went back to sage Vishwamitra as long as she was in the garden in his vicinity. Not facing Sita boldly and trying to avoid her would be tantamount to being defeated by Kamdeo (cupid), the patron God of love, passion, longing, desire and attraction. How can Lord Ram allow himself to be defeated by the onslaught of Kamdeo (cupid) in such a silly manner?

(ii) Secondly, Kamdeo (cupid) may have come to beg with the Lord to spare Sita the agony and misery of an uncertain future with a man she may not like. So, should the Lord deny Kamdeo (cupid) this request? Well, this is also unacceptable for a noble man of his stature; he can't turn away Kamdeo (cupid) without fulfilling his desires. So what options does the Lord have now? Obviously none—except to silently assure Kamdeo (cupid) that the Lord would be obliging him soon irrespective of whether it may cast some taint on his otherwise immaculate character. When one faces a piquant situation where both the options are bad, he must choose the better of the two. In this case it is better to accept some mischievous gossip about his character than to face the ignominy of having turned down the request of an alms-seeker in the form of Kamdeo (cupid).

This is the reason why Lord Ram apparently allows himself to get attracted to Sita at a subtle plain though he himself says that he wonders why this is happening at the grosser level of physical interaction in this world.

The three noble characters listed here pertain to the three higher sections or communities in the society—viz. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. Not to have lust for other's woman is a noble character of a Brahmin; not to run away from an enemy is the noble character of a Kshatriya (the warrior class); and to give charity and never turn away alms-seekers are a noble character of a Vaishya (the member of the trading community).]

दो०. करत बतकही अनुज सन मन सिय रूप लोभान ।

मुख सरोज मकरंद छबि करइ मधुप इव पान ॥ २३१ ॥

dōhā.

karata batakahī anuja sana mana siya rūpa lōbhāna.

mukha sarōja makaranda chabi kara'i madhupa iva pāna. 231.

While Lord Ram was talking in this manner with his younger brother, his mind however was enamoured by the beauty of Sita as it literally drank the nectar of her beauty just like a bee. (Doha no. 231)

[Note—A bee's attention is fixed on obtaining the nectar of the flower though it may hover over the flower and also wander around it for quite some time before actually alighting on it and sucking the nectar. Similarly here, though Sri Ram is talking to Laxman, his mind is fixed on Sita. This Doha concludes what has been said in the preceding verses.

However, it is remarkable that during this entire narration we find that Laxman has not uttered a single word; he has silently heard whatever his elder brother has said. Laxman did not wish to disturb Ram's emotional enjoyment and the sentimental reverie he was in. Laxman was wise enough to understand this and the practical thing that everyone should be given his personal space. A true friend and companion is one who gives a person full freedom to express his inner thoughts without fear of betrayal and being misunderstood. Laxman passed this test in flying colours.

In the next set of verses we shall be reading about Sita's condition and responses.]

चौ०. चितवति चकित चहूँ दिसि सीता । कहँ गए नृपकिसोर मनु चिंता ॥ १ ॥
जहँ बिलोकमृग सावकनैनी । जनु तहँ बरिस कमल सित श्रेनी ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

citavati cakita cahūṁ' disī sītā. kahaṁ' ga'ē nṛpakisōra manu cintā. 1.
jaham' bilōka mṛga sāvaka nainī. janu taham' barisa kamala sita śrēnī. 2.

Sita looked with amazement in every direction, for she could not see the two princes anywhere. Her Mana (mind and heart) was at a loss as to where they have gone¹. (1)

Wherever Sita, whose eyes were like that of a fawn, cast her glances it appeared that a stream of white lotus flowers² is flowing in that direction. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman had kept on walking in the garden because their primary job was to pluck flowers for the worship ritual of their Guru, sage Vishwamitra. So it happened that they went behind a thick cover of foliage and creepers where Sita could not view them from where she stood. So she peered here and there, in every direction anxiously, but could not have a glimpse of the princes. This made her uneasy. She wondered that they could not so quickly vanish from sight, so where have they gone? That is why she was amazed.

²There are three primary Gunas (qualities) in this creation: viz. (i) the Sata Guna which is the best of the three, is noble and virtuous, is marked by purity of mind and heart, and has white as its dominant colour; (ii) the Raja Guna which is the second quality, is concerned with creation and its upkeep and all the necessary characters needed to fulfill this obligation, and has red as its characteristic colour; and (iii) the Tama Guna which is the lowest and the meanest of the three, leads to moral degradation, decay and destruction, and is therefore dominated by the black colour, the colour of darkness and delusions.

By saying that wherever Sita glanced it appeared that “white lotus flowers are flowing”, it is implied that her mind was not corrupt, and that there was no trace of lust or

amorous intentions in her glances. As has been noted earlier in our discussion, the sense of mutual attraction between Ram and Sita had a divine connotation and a transcendental dimension to it. It is just like the case of an eager disciple being attracted to a true Guru (moral preceptor); when they meet they are mutually attracted to each other.

Why is it said that a “stream” of white lotus flowers is flowing instead of citing a single lotus? The reason is that when Sita looks in a particular direction, all her companions also begin to look there. So it’s not one but many girls looking in a particular direction like a stream flowing in that way. And since all of them have a pure heart, the looking is also symbolized by the metaphor of white lotus flowers which stand for purity of thought and intention.

Further, the conjunctiva of the eye is white in colour, so when all the maidens were looking in the same direction, the poet imagines that a stream of white lotus flowers is flowing that way.]

लता ओट तब सखिन्ह लखाए । स्यामल गौर किसोर सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥
देखि रूप लोचन ललचाने । हरषे जनु निज निधि पहिचाने ॥ ४ ॥

latā ōṭa taba sakhinha lakhā'ē. syāmala gaura kisōra suhā'ē. 3.
dēkhi rūpa lōcana lalacānē. haraṣē janu nija nidhi pahicānē. 4.

Her (Sita's) companions then pointed out to her the two brothers, one of a dark and the other of a fair complexion, standing behind a thick bevy of creepers. (3)

Seeing the wonderful sight (of the two princes), her eyes looked at them so eagerly and longingly as if she has found her wealth, that is dearest to her heart, lying nearby. (4)

[Note—Tulsidas, the poet-author who has penned this immortal epic “Ram Charit Manas” is at his best, in his finest writing mettle and poetic form while describing this scene in the garden where Sita meets Lord Ram. Aside of the devotional and spiritual quotient, this narration also incorporates the ‘love angle’ of the epic story.

Here we have two souls destined to be each other's partner for life meeting one another for the first time before their partnership is formalized. The world would like to call them as being bitten by the ‘love bug’, but it is the pull of the divine Spirit living inside their bosom, the compatibility of the vibrations of their individual hearts that begins to resonate in such a way that makes it appear that the two individuals are mutually attracted to each other. If this vibration does not match, mere physical closeness would not produce true love and abiding affection.

It was Sita's companion who first spotted the two princes behind the curtain of creepers. Sita was very nervous, so she could not see them herself. Here we observe that Lord Ram did not stand in the open space of the garden but was seen behind creepers. This shows that he did not want to violate laws of moral conduct and royal etiquette by standing shamelessly in front of a princess. Had he done so, it would have been in bad taste.

Further, the Lord wished to ascertain whether Sita was really eager to have his Darshan (divine viewing), or would turn away after a casual look around. By being behind the creepers, he also maintained a sort of decorum whereby Sita was given an opportunity to have a look at the two brothers as if she was viewing them from behind a virtual curtain. It would be decent and look civilized.

The relationship between Lord Ram and Sita is of an eternal nature and most ancient. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 229.

Ever since Lord Vishnu took birth as Lord Ram, his divine consort Laxmi in the physical form of Sita was forced to remain away from him. That is why it is said that “she recognized her Lord like a person recognizing his long-lost wealth that is very dear to him”. Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 248.]

थके नयन रघुपति छबि देखें । पलकन्हिहूँ परिहरीं निमेषें ॥ ५ ॥
अधिक सनेहँ देह भै भोरी । सरद ससिहि जनु चितव चकोरी ॥ ६ ॥

thakē nayana raghupati chabi dēkhēm. palakanhihūṁ pariharīṁ nimēṣēm. 5.
adhika sanēhamṁ dēha bhai bhōrī. sarada sasihi janu citava cakōrī. 6.

The eyes of Sita becomes motionless, as if tired, as she watched the bewitching beauty of the image of Raghupati (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty). For quite some time her eyelids forgot to blink. (5)

Due to a surge of great affection that overwhelmed her entire being, she lost consciousness of her body just like the bird Chakor loses awareness of its physical existence when it starts gazing at the beauty of the full moon’s disc during an autumn night. (6)

[Note—Sita is overwhelmed by the divine and transcendental beauty of Lord Ram’s face. Her condition is compared to the Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge, which is renowned for its love of the full moon. Chakor gazes at the moon’s disc without blinking, and it goes on tilting its head so that its eyes remain focused on the moon as it traverses across the sky. It is believed that the moon looks its best during the whole year in the first full-moon night of autumn.

Sita was virtually dazed by the Lord’s charming image, and for some time her mind lost awareness of its surroundings. This is a natural phenomenon, a natural reaction of the body when one is absolutely stunned by the sight one sees.

Earlier, this condition was applicable for Lord Ram: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 230.

Sita’s eyes became “motionless as if tired” because it could not cope with the profundity of the beauty of Lord Ram’s image. Her eyes continued to look at the Lord without blinking, making them tired and droop. Sita did not wish to miss even a fraction of a second without watching this beautiful image for the fear of losing it the moment her eyes take rest to blink. This continuous staring tired her eyes so much so that they drooped and looked heavy.

There is an interesting interpretation of this line. Sita’s attention was transfixed on the face of Lord Ram, and she was so dazed by its magnificent beauty that she did not look at any other part of his body. The moon always shines during the night; Lord Ram’s complexion is also dark but radiant like the night that is drenched in the light of the moon during an autumnal night. The whole environment is sentimentally charged during such full-moon nights, but a person looks up at the moon rather than the surrounding sky if he wishes to enjoy the beauty of the night and the moon-light. While looking at the full moon, a person will not look at any other heavenly body no matter how interesting or attractive it is. So is the case with Sita—she is focused on Lord Ram’s face which is

glorious and splendorous like the full moon during the night of autumn, and has no inclination to bother either to look at any other part of the Lord's body or even at Laxman.

Lord Ram had praised the beauty of Sita in his heart but hadn't found words to express how beautiful her image was: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 230. This emotion is reciprocated here by Sita who was “so thrilled by the sight of Lord Ram's image that her body lost awareness of its self”.

Lord Ram was closely observing Sita's behaviour. Later on we shall read in Sundar Kand that the Lord has conveyed to Sita when she was a captive in Lanka that his Mana (mind and heart) is also with her, and this is sufficient to explain the depth of his love and affection for her: refer—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 15; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, 1/77/26-27.

Again, after the war for liberation of Sita from Ravana's captivity ended and Sita was asked to undergo the fire-test to prove her loyalty, she has once again reiterated that “if her mind, heart, words and deeds ('Mana', 'Vachan', and 'Karma') are dedicated to no one else except Lord Ram, then let the raging fire become cool like the 'Srikhand' (liquefied sandalwood; a liquid preparation of curd and sugar) for her”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109.]

लोचन मग रामहि उर आनी । दीन्हे पलक कपाट सयानी ॥ ७ ॥

lōcana maga rāmaḥi ura ānī. dīnhē palaka kapāṭa sayānī. 7.

Sita symbolically brought in and enshrined Lord Ram in her heart, and then closed the eyelids as if closing the doors of a shrine. (7)

[Note—Fantastic imagery, indeed. Sita must have sighed silently and etched the image of Lord Ram on the canvas of her mind and sub-conscious. It's like taking the picture of one's beloved and keeping it close to one's heart because one does not know whether one will be able to see the beloved again in life. One has no control over one's destiny and one cannot openly join one's beloved and be close to him in physical terms, but one is free to hold his memory in one's heart and mind for the rest of life.

The heart is a pure abode: it is here that the soul, the Atma, lives; it is here that the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma lives in the form of one's individual Atma. That is why purest form of 'love' is said to have its abode in the heart. The heart is therefore like a shrine, a citadel, a holy place of the Lord God, the Parmatma.

This metaphysical perspective is deployed here to describe how Sita brought in the image of her beloved Lord, Sri Ram, quietly to enshrine it or enthrone it in the secret chambers of her heart. It is the chamber where no one else would discover the Lord, and it is here that she will have an unrestricted access to him. This is how a true lover behaves; this is where Sita hoped to worship her Lord for all times to come in the future.

She closed her eyes to ensure that the picture of Lord Ram that she has etched on the mind's canvas does not get tainted or damaged by any other image superimposing itself on it. She wanted to retain its clarity and make it permanent and everlasting.

Now, a question arises as to why have I compared Sita's heart to a 'shrine' or a 'temple'. Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram, while describing the places where the Lord should live like they were his own home, that “the Lord should always live in the Mana (mind and heart) of a person who does not want anything whatsoever in this world, but has selfless and purest kind of affection for the Lord as if the Mana of this person was the Lord's own abode or shrine”.]

जब सिय सखिन्ह प्रेमबस जानी । कहि न सकहिं कछु मन सकुचानी ॥ ८ ॥

jaba siya sakhinha prēmabasa jānī. kahi na sakahīṁ kachu mana sakucānī. 8.

When Sita's companions found that she was overcome with intense love (for Lord Ram), all of them felt abashed, and could not utter a word out of hesitation. (8)

[Note—Why the hesitation? It is because it is they who had inspired Sita to come and have a look at the two princes. Now, what can they say; how will they explain to Sita's mother, the queen, her emotional condition if she is not able to conceal it wisely. It's a very piquant and sticky situation. When one falls in love, no amount of reasoning and cajoling will pull him or her out of it. The girls feared Sita because after all she was a princess and their mistress; if she gets annoyed then she can get them severely punished and even imprisoned or banished from the city. It's not wise and prudent to disturb a lovelorn princess; it's very dangerous.

This fear extended to Sita's mother: no one could predict her reaction when she comes to know that these attendant girls, who were after all maid servants of the royal household, had incited her daughter to meet a stranger in the garden. The queen-mother could give them the severest form of punishment. Not only these girls, but the entire guard of the royal garden could be thrown into the prison.

Another reason for their reluctance to say something to Sita was that she had her eyes closed. No one could be sure what was going on in her mind: she might as well be meditating upon goddess Parvati or saying some silent prayers. It would also not be proper to disturb her if this was true—because it is a sinful act to disturb someone when he or she is meditating upon God.

Initially it was only one of the attendant girls who had brought the news of the two brothers to Sita, and had the rest of them kept quiet they would have escaped punishment if anything went wrong; only this girl would suffer. But now they all were neck-deep in trouble; it was like being in a quagmire—if they kept quiet, Sita would continue to stand there gazing at the place where Lord Ram stood, and it was getting inordinately late for worship in the temple and returning to the palace, and if they said something that annoyed the princess then also severe punishment was sure to come.]

दो०. लताभवन तें प्रगट भे तेहि अवसर दोउ भाइ ।

निकसे जनु जुग बिमल बिधु जलद पटल बिलगाइ ॥ २३२ ॥

dōhā.

latābhavana tēm pragata bhē tēhi avasara dō'u bhā'i.

nikasē janu juga bimala bidhu jalada paṭala bilagā'i. 232.

Just at that instant (when Sita stood motionless with eyes closed, and her companions were in a fix not knowing what to do and say), the two brothers emerged from behind the shade of the creepers as if two spotlessly shining moons have broken through the veil of clouds. (Doha no. 232)

[Note—This is Lord Ram's nature—he first keeps himself invisible from the sight of his devotee, but as soon as he is sure that the devotee is fully surrendered to him and has true

and sincere affection and devotion for him, the Lord manifests himself before his devotee. That manifestation is like the emergence of the brilliant moon from behind the curtain of dark clouds in the sky. When the cloud covers the face of the moon, the sky and the world appear dark, but as soon as the moon appears the whole world suddenly lights up in the moon's beautiful rays.

As long as the Lord was not sure whether or not Sita sincerely longed for him and if she was not watching something else in the garden in the guise of looking at him, he kept himself behind the curtain formed by the bevy of creepers. But as soon as he realised that she has become motionless and has shut her eyes to indicate that she will not move anywhere but remain grounded at the place like a lifeless statue, the Lord came in view.

He had also observed the consternation and alarm on the faces of Sita's companions. This development has a spiritual message—that the Lord would not allow someone who has shown his devotee the path to the Lord to feel regret and afraid of punishment. If something went wrong, such as Sita getting late in offering her worship and returning to the palace in time, her mother, the queen, is sure to get angry at Sita as well as her attendants. This thing Lord Ram did not want to allow happening. So he did not want to waste any more time, and appeared before Sita and her group, thereby giving the companions of Sita a chance and an excuse to interfere in her emotional reverie.

A pertinent question arises: why is it said that the two brothers emerged from behind the creepers as if “two moons” have broken from behind the curtain of clouds when there is only ‘one moon’ in the sky, and ‘not two’? Well, this observation is very significant and interesting. We can draw the following meaning from it:--

(i) At the instant the two brothers emerged from behind the shade of the creepers, Sita's eyes were closed, and it was her many girl companions who were looking nervously here and there. Whereas Sita's attention was focused entirely and exclusively on Lord Ram, the others were glancing here and there. It implies that if one is not focused on the Lord, he or she will start hallucinating, because seeing ‘two moons’ is a metaphoric way of saying someone is under great delusions and is hallucinating. Therefore, if one wishes to attain the Lord God, he must behave like Sita and not like her companions. Sita had seen only ‘one moon’ in the form of Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232), whereas her companions see ‘two moons’ here (Doha no. 232)!

(ii) These companions of Sita had known where the Lord stood, they were the ones who had shown Sita the way to the Lord, but unfortunately they had themselves failed to drink the nectar that Sita had drunk. So it is in this world: we come across countless people who would wisely tell us the path of spirituality, but rarely do they walk on it themselves. It is often also observed that a sincere and eager disciple attains the spiritual goal that his Guru had advised him, while the Guru himself remains embroiled and entangled in the nightmare of this deluding world. It's indeed a great irony.

(iii) As soon as the moon appears from behind the dark veil of the clouds, the darkness of the night vanishes. Similarly, as soon as the Lord God makes his appearance in the firmament of the devotee's heart, all his spiritual delusions and fears disappear. His inner self is brilliantly illuminated and ghosts and phantoms run away.

(iv) The moon shines because it reflects the light of the sun. Lord Ram is like the sun of the Raghu dynasty as well as the one who illuminates the inner being of the creature in the form of the Atma, the pure consciousness that lives in his heart. Out of the two brothers, Lord Ram is of a dark complexion while Laxman is fair. So a tricky situation arises—Lord Ram, the real ‘sun’, is dark, while Laxman who is like his shadow, or like a ‘moon’ that shines or obtains its glory in the light of the sun, is fair. This Doha conveys the message that both Lord Ram and Laxman complement each other; no one should be

taken as being junior or senior to the other. Both of them have equal importance in this creation if we were to look at them from the cosmic perspective of creation.

It is on the coiled body of Seshnath that Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk, known as the Kshir-sagar. It is Laxman in his cosmic role of Seshnath who supports the world—so assiduously looked after and cared for by Lord Vishnu—on his thousand hoods. If Lord Vishnu sustains this world, it is Laxman in his cosmic form as Seshnath who gives support to Vishnu's endeavour. Just imagine what would happen to this world so lovingly cared for by Vishnu if Seshnath would not support it; it would sink in the cosmic void to god knows where.

Therefore, this Doha seeks to put to rest any misunderstanding in the mind of the reader that Laxman is being side-tracked or his glory undermined anywhere in the narrative.

In fact, this Doha stresses that the two brothers enhance each other's glory like the appearance of two moons simultaneously in the sky would obviously increase the brightness of the night at least by two times.

There is one more reason of the two brothers emerging from behind the curtain of creepers while Sita had her eyes closed. This is explained in a note to verse nos. 1-2 that follow below.]

चौ०. सोभा सीवँ सुभग दोड बीरा । नील पीत जलजाभ सरीरा ॥ १ ॥
मोरपंख सिर सोहत नीके । गुच्छ बीच बिच कुसुम कली के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sōbhā sīvam' subhaga dō'u bīrā. nīla pīta jalajābha sarīrā. 1.
mōrapaṅkha sira sōhata nīkē. guccha bīca bica kusuma kalī kē. 2.

‘The two warriors are images of perfect beauty. [That is, there cannot be anyone more beautiful and charming than them; they were virtually beauty and charm in a personified form.]

The complexion of their bodies resembles the hue of a blue and a yellow lotus flower respectively. [Lord Ram had a dark complexion like a blue-tinged or pink lotus, while Laxman was fair like a lotus with a yellow hue.] (1)

Beautiful peacock feathers adorn their heads which also has bunches of flower buds imbedded here and there in the thick lock of hairs. (2)

[Note—We have read above that at the time the two brothers emerged from behind the curtain of creepers to make themselves visible to Sita and her companions, Sita had her eyes closed, and therefore this image of Lord Ram and Laxman was seen by her companions. Sita continued to meditate, with closed eyes, upon the image of Lord Ram she had last seen. We shall read below that one of her companions woke her up from her reverie, or as she herself puts it “from her meditative posture”, to see this wonderful image. It was then that Sita opened her eyes to behold the stunning image of beauty standing right in her front. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 234.

Meanwhile, in these lines we read about the fabulous beauty of the two brothers that was enjoyed by Sita's companions. Lord Ram wished to give these girls an opportunity to enjoy the wonderful sight of his fascinating image; he did not want to deprive them of this privilege. This is also one of the reasons why he emerged from behind the creepers

while Sita had her eyes closed—because this gave her maids an unhindered chance to look at the two brothers without any obstruction or hesitation, or annoying their mistress, princess Sita, who may not like them to stare at a stranger young prince in her presence as it would be indecent and violate norms of ethical conduct which requires that unmarried girls should not look at strangers, especially if they are young boys of their age, alone.

Once again we note that while Sita's mind registered only the beauty and presence of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232), her companions saw 'both the brothers' (Doha no. 232). This explains the metaphor of "two beautiful moons emerging from behind the veil of clouds" as said in Doha no. 232.

In Tulsidas' book called 'Geetawali', in its Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10 it is reiterated that "the creator has established millions of moons and Kamdeos on each part of the body of these two princes". Refer also: Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 17, stanza no. 1.

The condition of these girls is like a flock of Chakor birds gazing at the full moon—refer: Geetawali's Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 14, stanza no. 3.

But in order to remove any doubt that since these two princes are so delicate, tender and beautiful they must have been brought up in a much pampered manner in a privileged background and never allowed to face hardships of life, it is said that they are "warriors" ('Biraa'—the 5th word of verse no. 1). Warriors may be handsome, attractive and exceptionally charming, but are surely never weak, meek, or wanting in physical strength and valour.

This said, the physical features of both the brothers are being described. The narration starts from the head and goes down the body. It makes the reader look at the fascinating image of the two brothers from the awe-struck eyes of the friends of Sita as they watched Lord Ram and Laxman.

Their heads were decorated with peacock feathers, as well as flowers and buds tucked in-between the lock of hairs. When the two brothers had gone to see the city of Janakpur the previous evening, they were formally dressed like princes: they wore caps on their heads because it was a formal outing and so they were attired like noble princes (refer: line no. 1 of Doha no. 219).

But now when they are in the garden plucking flowers for the worship ritual of their Guru, it is morning. Hence, they were informally attired in a casual manner. This meant in practical terms that they weren't wearing royal clothes befitting princes making a public appearance. So, as is the tradition, they were wearing informal apparel consisting of a long piece of seamless body-wrapping silk cloth known as a 'Pitambar' if it is yellow in colour, or a 'Dhoti' if it is white or of some other shade of colour. This also meant that the upper parts of their bodies, waist-upwards, were exposed—and this is the reason why the companions of Sita could make out the complexion of the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman as being dark and fair respectively.]

भाल तिलक श्रमबिंदु सुहाए । श्रवन सुभग भूषन छबि छाए ॥ ३ ॥

बिकट भृकुटि कच घूँघरवारे । नव सरोज लोचन रतनारे ॥ ४ ॥

bhāla tilaka śramabindu suhā'ē. śravana subhaga bhūṣana chabi chā'ē. 3.
bikaṭa bhkuṭi kaca ghūṅgharavārē. nava sarōja lōcana ratanārē. 4.

A 'Tilak-Mark' and beads of perspiration (resembling pearls) look wonderful on their foreheads. The beautifully carved ears reflect the luster of shiny ear-rings. (3)

Their eyebrows are arched (like the curve of a bow); their hairs are curly; and their pink eyes are fresh like a newly-opened lotus flower of a red-hue. (4)

[Note—The 'Tilak mark' is worn by Hindus on their forehead. It consists of three parallel lines drawn vertically in the center of the forehead just above the root of the nose and extending upto the hairline. This mark is made after one takes a bath in the morning. Therefore this means that the two brothers have already taken their morning bath.

The presence of beads of perspiration on the foreheads of Lord Ram and Laxman indicate the following things:

- (i) Though it is morning hours, it is hot in the garden and no breeze is blowing;
- (ii) They had gone behind the cluster of thick creepers where it must have been very suffocative, causing sweat to break out on their foreheads; this also explains why they came out of the alcove of creepers to get some fresh air;
- (iii) They had been walking in the garden for some time, plucking flowers and leaves, and hence must have felt hot due to this exertion because, being princes, they weren't accustomed to such effort; they would simply order their servants and gardeners to bring flowers and never go out personally to search the entire garden for them;
- (iv) And that they were nervous at the sight of so many girls staring at them unblinkingly and talking animatedly about them.

Other features of the face are curly hairs and ears adorned with ear-rings. It means that the two brothers were very conscious that the love-struck girls were watching them very closely and exhaustively. This made them excessively nervous, causing them to perspire.]

चारु चिबुक नासिका कपोला । हास बिलास लेत मनु मोला ॥ ५ ॥

मुखछबि कहि न जाइ मोहि पाहीं । जो बिलोकि बहु काम लजाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

cāru cibuka nāsikā kapōlā. hāsa bilāsa lēta manu mōlā. 5.

mukhachabi kahi na jā'i mōhi pāhīm. jō bilōki bahu kāma lajāhīm. 6.

They have lovely chins, noses and cheeks. Their smile as well as pleasant gestures and demeanours are so bewitching and compelling with their fascinating charm that it seems the Mana (mind and heart) has been held captive and enslaved by them. [That is, when one watches the smile of Lord Ram and Laxman and their charming demeanours, one is inclined to willingly lose his heart to them and focus his mind on them.]¹ (5)

It is not possible for me² to describe the fabulous beauty of their faces which put to shame the pride of countless Kamdeos (or cupid—who is regarded as the patron god of beauty, and of everything that is wonderful to behold).³ (6)

[Note—¹This line that says Lord Ram and Laxman were smiling and making pleasant gestures imply that like the girls who accompanied Sita, the two brothers were also talking with each other softly in hushed tones. They must have been naturally talking about the way the group of girls was awe-struck by their presence, feeling fidgety and squirming and giggling nervously.

²The word 'me' clearly implies that one of the girls in the group that accompanied Sita was loudly speaking about the charming view of the two brothers as they stood in sight. Others in the group were already watching the two brothers, so why was she speaking aloud? Well, the answer is interesting: As we have read, Sita had her eyes closed as if meditating, and the maids were too scared to wake her up (refer: Chaupai line

nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 232). So the chief maiden in the group was searching for an excuse to bring Sita back to her senses. And this was the perfect excuse—the two brothers were standing right in front, and by describing their beauty aloud she expected to wake Sita from her trance.

But as it happened, she failed. Sita was so deeply submerged in meditating upon the image of her Lord Ram, which she had brought in and enshrined in her heart, that she did not hear and pay attention to what was being said. This is clear when we read Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 234. In the first instance it is said that “Sita brought the image of Lord Ram inside her heart and closed its doors by shutting her eyes”, and in the second instance it is said that “one of her companions gathered enough courage to tell Sita to meditate upon Goddess Parvati later on, and instead she should first see the beautiful sight of the prince (Lord Ram) before it vanishes or he moves away from sight”.

³There are countless instances where the beauty of Lord Ram is highlighted by saying that numerous Kamdeos (cupids) are no match for the Lord’s charm. Refer, for instance, Geetawali—(i) Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 4; verse no. 17, stanza no. 1; verse no. 26, stanza no. 2 etc.]

उर मनि माल कंबु कल गीवा । काम कलभ कर भुज बलसींवा ॥ ७ ॥

सुमन समेत बाम कर दोना । सावँर कुअँर सखी सुठि लोना ॥ ८ ॥

ura mani māla kambu kala gīvā. kāma kalabha kara bhuja balasīnvā. 7.

sumana samēta bāma kara dōnā. sāvamṛa ku'amṛa sakhī suṭhi lōnā. 8.

They have a garland of gems resting upon their chests. Their necks are as beautiful as a conch-shell with its rounded and spiral contours. Their long and muscular arms are as attractive and strong as the trunk of young elephants. (7)

Oh dear friend! With a cup made of leaves that is full of flowers, the dark-complexioned prince is indeed exceptionally charming.’ (8)

[Note—When Sita did not pay any attention to all that was said earlier, this chief companion concluded that it was because she has been describing the ‘two brothers’ instead of Lord Ram alone. Sita was struck by Lord Ram’s charm, and once she fell in love with the Lord she is not bothered about anyone else. So this wise and clever girl concluded her description by stressing that out of the two princes, it is Ram who draws attention with his unmatched charm. Both the brothers are charming, but Ram is more so. Perhaps she thought that when she will refer to Lord Ram specifically it would wake Sita up from her trance-like state. But unfortunately it did not happen. Sita was deep in meditation and unbothered about her surroundings. She has to be woken up purposely—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 234 below.]

दो०. केहरि कटि पट पीत धर सुषमा सील निधान ।

देखि भानुकुलभूषनहि बिसरा सखिन्ह अपान ॥ २३३ ॥

dōhā.

kēhari kaṭi paṭa pīta dhara suṣamā sīla nidhāna.
dēkhi bhānukulabhūṣanahi bisarā sakhinha apāna. 233.

He (Lord Ram) has a slim waist like that of a lion¹, and is wearing a Pitambar². He is an embodiment of beauty and decency³.

Seeing this most fascinating and bewitching sight of the Lord of the solar race, the friends of Sita lost awareness of themselves.⁴ (Doha no. 233)

[Note—¹A lion has a very strong and muscular body, but its waist area is slim. This metaphor is used to stress that Lord Ram may be delicate and tender in his appearance but he is as strong as a lion. Besides this, the lion is the king of the forest. Hence, it means that Lord Ram is the king of this world.

²The ‘Pitambar’ is a yellow coloured seamless single piece of silk cloth wrapped around the body. It is usually wrapped around the lower half of the body, round the waist and below it to cover the legs. A length of it is swung loosely across the shoulders to drape the upper part of the body as well. But in the case of warriors, the upper part of the body is usually left undraped and the Pitambar is worn only on the lower part from the waist down.

³Lord Ram and Laxman have maintained full decency and etiquette during this interaction in the garden. It will be noted that when Sita appeared on the scene and the two brothers noticed that she is looking at them, they quietly moved away from sight and went behind a thick curtain formed by dense creepers. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 232. This was to uphold laws of decent behaviour whereby strangers ought not to allow themselves to be stared at by unmarried girls. Besides this, Lord Ram was a prince himself and he was well aware of royal manners and etiquette: female members of the royal household were not expected to directly see males not related to them. No lewd remarks or gestures were passed or exchanged. Though the atmosphere was charged with love and mutual attraction, but there was no trace of vulgarity and indecency of any kind whatsoever.

⁴We have read earlier that Sita was overwhelmed by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram. Now it is emphasized that even her companions are swept off their feet by the Lord’s charm.]

चौ०. धरि धीरजु एक आलि सयानी । सीता सन बोली गहि पानी ॥ १ ॥
बहुरि गौरि कर ध्यान करेहू । भूपकिसोर देखि किन लेहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhari dhīraju ēka āli sayānī. sītā sana bōlī gahi pānī. 1.
bahuri gauri kara dhyāna karēhū. bhūpakisōra dēkhi kina lēhū. 2.

One of Sita’s clever friends gathered courage to break Sita’s trance-like state of reverie. She held Sita’s hands and told her—[1] ‘Dear, you can meditate upon Gauri (goddess Parvati) later on. Why don’t you presently have a good look at the young prince of the king (‘Bhup-kishore’—i.e. Lord Ram). [2]’ (1-2)

[Note—Not only Sita but all of her companions were held enthralled by the magnificent view of Lord Ram and Laxman; all of them were spell-bound and transfixed at the sight. But one of them decided that enough was enough, and that it was getting late to return to the palace after performing worship of goddess Parvati at the garden temple, which was the main purpose of the group's visit to the garden. She is called 'clever' because she was expert in maintaining protocol as she pretended that Sita was meditating upon the goddess instead of being stunned by the beauty of Lord Ram so much so that she couldn't move a bit. The fact that Sita was overwhelmed by the sight of Lord Ram's enchanting view and had preferred to hurry to see the two brothers instead of sticking to her original plan of performing worship at the temple and returning home is abundantly clear by reading (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 228, (ii) Doha no. 229 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8, and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 232.

She was after all a maid, and therefore she had to gather courage to interfere with her mistress' thought process because there was always the fear of annoying Sita who was a princess, and inviting her wrath. This friend observed that Sita was so much lost in the thoughts of Lord Ram that inspite of the girls chattering away and loudly describing the glamorous sight of the two brothers as they emerged from behind the curtain of creepers, Sita's trance did not break. So this girl had to be extra careful—and this is why she told Sita to "meditate upon goddess Parvati later on", because it ensured that Sita would not accuse her of casting a taint on her character by implying that she was besotted by an unknown stranger prince, something that would put Sita in the docks and besmirch her reputation.

This girl was the chief maid because only someone with a responsibility and position would have the guts to hold the hands of a princess and wake her up from day-dreaming. She in all probability had squeezed Sita's hands to wake her up from her trance as she realized that other methods, such as orally alerting her, would not look nice as the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, were closely observing her activities. The garden was a quiet place, and trying to wake Sita by verbal methods was sure to be heard by the two brothers, and this would give a wrong impression to the two princes regarding the character of Sita. After all, they too were of royal blood and understood well the decorum and protocols of royal behaviour—which stipulates, inter alia, that a princess should not step beyond the red-line by getting enamored of and enthralled by complete strangers.

Therefore, this 'clever' friend thought of holding, squeezing and shaking Sita's hands to wake her up from her day-dreaming instead of doing so verbally.

There is yet another way of interpreting these two lines. This chief maid knew well that Sita was thinking of Lord Ram, so she sort of alerted her that instead of meditating upon the image of Lord Ram why doesn't she open her eyes and have a direct look at the same image while it is still there in the front. Later on she can always close her eyes and recollect that image, but she should not miss this golden opportunity of having a direct look at the two brothers while they are still within sight. She was clever to convey this message while observing the rules of etiquette and protocol by saying that "Sita should first look at the princes now, and then meditate upon the goddess later on".]

सकुचि सीयँ तब नयन उघारे । सनमुख दोउ रघुसिंघ निहारे ॥ ३ ॥

sakuci sīyam̐ taba nayana ughārē. sanamukha dō'u raghusingha nihārē. 3.

Sita felt bashful as she hesitatingly opened her eyes to behold the two lions of Raghu dynasty standing opposite her (near the alcove of creepers). (3)

[Note—Sita felt ‘bashful’ because she realized that her friends have become aware that she is besotted by the beauty of two stranger princes. Since this was indeed the case, she ‘hesitatingly’ opened her eyes because she would be facing the two princes face to face. Sita had previously closed her eyes out of feeling of bashfulness when she saw that the two princes were staring at her from behind the curtain of creepers. Now her friend tells her to open her eyes and look at the two princes directly. Surely this was a very embarrassing situation.

Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman are compared to a lion of the Raghu dynasty because this metaphor is most suitable for them. A lion is the king of the animals and the forest, and it has a very strong and muscular body. Similarly, the two brothers were kings in their own right, and had a magnificent personality with a well-built body with a muscular frame.]

नख सिख देखि राम कै सोभा । सुमिरि पिता पनु मनु अति छोभा ॥ ४ ॥

nakha sikha dēkhi rāma kai sōbhā. sumiri pitā panu manu ati chōbhā. 4.

Sita was enthralled as she watched the wonderful image of Lord Ram, from the toe nails right upto his head. Then she felt very perturbed as she remembered the stern vow of her father (which declared that anyone who would break Lord Shiva’s strong bow would be married to Sita irrespective of whether she likes it or not, and ignoring her personal views and preferences). (4)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/71, stanza no. 3 also.

When Sita opened her eyes, her sight first fell on the feet of Lord Ram, and slowly and bashfully she raised her eyes to see his face. This meant that now she was having a full view of the beautifully enchanting image of the Lord. She longed to have Ram as her groom, but her father’s stern vows came in the way. How unfortunate it was that she had no say in her own future and its happiness. Out of hesitation and requirements of royal protocol she did not have the courage to even tell her father what she wished because it would immediately invite scorn, rebuke and punishment.

Besides this now it was too late because all the princes and kings had already arrived to participate in the bow ceremony. Forcing her father to go back on his declaration would mean an eternal ignominy on the whole family that would cause irreparable damage to its reputation.

So Sita was extremely perturbed and depressed because though she had mentally decided to pick Lord Ram as her life companion and would like to spend her entire life with him, it seemed that her wishes would remain unrequited because of the vows of her father that stipulated that anyone who broke Shiva’s bow would marry her.]

परबस सखिन्ह लखी जब सीता । भयउ गहरु सब कहहिं सभीता ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि आउब एहि बेरिआँ काली । अस कहि मन बिहसी एक आली ॥ ६ ॥

parabasa sakhinha lakhī jaba sītā. bhaya'u gaharu saba kahahim sabhītā. 5.
puni ā'uba ēhi bēri'ām' kālī. asa kahi mana bihasī ēka ālī. 6.

When Sita’s companions observed that she was under the spell of a stranger (i.e. Lord Ram), they felt very embarrassed themselves. Afraid of being inordinately late (in

performing worship of goddess Parvati and returning to the palace, which would certainly invite enquiry and stern admonishment from the queen mother), they told Sita—‘We are getting late. So please hurry up. (5)

We will come to this place tomorrow again at the same hour (when you will have more opportunity to see the two princes who are also expected to come to pluck flowers for their Guru, sage Vishwamitra).’

Saying this, one of Sita’s companions smiled within herself (because she, being a close friend of Sita, was passing this comment to tease her, making Sita feel more bashful and embarrassed). (6)

[Note—Again, this girl was the head maid. Sita’s companions were afraid because they were getting unduly late in completing the worship and returning to the palace. If the queen mother comes to learn what happened in the garden, she would certainly take all of them to task. The queen had sent them to guard Sita’s privacy and ensure that no outsider is able to violate royal protocol and come within viewing distance of the princess. If the queen comes to know that outside gentlemen had entered the garden against royal orders and had come too close to the princess, it would mean strong punishment for all of them as well as the guards and gardeners of the royal garden for their laxity and allowing this to happen.

What answer would they give when asked why did they dare to take Sita at the place where outsiders were present, and the friend who had actually brought the news of the presence of the two brothers would be singled out for the sternest form of punishment. This is why they were all afraid of getting late to return because it is sure to arouse suspicion.

When this friend warned Sita that they were getting too late, she also felt afraid because of her mother wondering at the cause of this delay—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 234 below.

The most jovial amongst the companions teased Sita in a friendly way by telling her that if she is so enamoured of the princes then they all would come here tomorrow again so that she can have more fun. She said this in audibly loud so that the two brothers would also hear it and would find some excuse to come there at the same time the next day.

She laughed at herself because she knew that what she had just said—that they would come here tomorrow and then Sita would be able to watch the two princes more—was virtually impossible to implement as the next day would be extremely busy because the bow ceremony was scheduled for that day. Today they were relaxed, but tomorrow the entire household would be on its toes, getting ready for the bow ceremony from early morning. Even if they did manage to come to the garden temple, it would be a hurried affair.

Besides this, all the invited guests would be preparing to attend the ceremony, and there was little or no chance that the two brothers would come again and be in a relaxed mood as they are today.

This friend’s advice caused a lot of embarrassment for Sita because it clearly implied that she has fallen in love with a stranger, and for a young unmarried girl this is a reason for feeling shy and abashed.]

गूढ़ गिरा सुनि सिय सकुचानी । भयउ बिलंबु मातु भय मानी ॥ ७ ॥

gūṛha girā suni siya sakucānī. bhaya'u bilambu mātu bhaya mānī. 7.

Hearing these serious words that had a double-edged meaning to them as they were meant to tease Sita, she felt highly embarrassed and bashful even as she blushed exceedingly. At the same time she became afraid of being punished by her mother for getting too late to return to the palace. (7)

[Note—Sita realized that it was futile for her to harbour any thoughts of Lord Ram in her heart because her future was tied to the vows of her father. When her companion told her that they would come here the next day when she would be able to see more of the two princes, Sita realized that she was being teased as it was a very remote possibility to see the two brothers again after today's encounter in the garden because in all probability they will go away the next day once the bow ceremony was over and she was betrothed to some great king or prince.

The two princes, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, were strangers, and no one can ever be certain of a stranger; no one can say for sure whether one would meet a stranger again in life or not. Perhaps their Guru, sage Vishwamitra, would get informed that the two brothers had been roaming in the garden looking at girls. In all probability, the sage would not allow them to repeat it again for fear of a scandal and a taint on their immaculate reputation which was not ordinary, for the two brothers belonged to a famous family of king Raghu which is famed for being extremely upright and moral in conduct and thought.

After the bow ceremony is over, there would be little chance of the two princes coming to the garden again the second or the third day because all the guests would be preparing to leave, and even if they did come the chances of Sita visiting the place was most remote as she would have no excuse to come to offer worship to goddess Parvati to seek her blessings for a suitable husband because this issue would be decided by the next day when the bow ceremony would be held.

Sita was also afraid that if she was inordinately late to return, it would cause her mother to become suspicious of her activities and ask her so many uncomfortable questions. She was already tormented, and did not want to aggravate her condition more by having to answer irritating questions. So she felt 'afraid' at getting late.]

धरि बड़ि धीर रामु उर आने । फिरी अपनपउ पितुबस जाने ॥ ८ ॥

dhari baḍidhīra rāmu ura ānē. phirī apanapa'u pitubasa jānē. 8.

Sita gathered her wits around with a lot of patience and courage, and she resolutely brought in the image of Lord Ram and enshrined it inside her heart. She then reluctantly turned back, realizing the practicality of the situation that she was dependent on her father and was not independent to decide anything herself about her future. (8)

[Note—Sita faced a piquant situation. Personally she wished to marry Lord Ram, but the ground reality was that she had no say in deciding who her husband would be as this was tied to the breaking of the bow as decided by her father. It was such a painful situation where a girl had no say about her future happiness, and what she wanted or not wanted.

She wanted to stay a bit longer to view the enchanting image of her beloved, but then it was getting late and she was afraid of her mother. Further, her companions had started teasing her and poking fun at her, something that irritated her more at this point of time as it was not the time for such pranks and making fun. Her heart was heavy as lead, she was under great emotional and mental stress, and at this juncture instead of empathising with

her these maids were taunting her with sarcastic comments. She felt ruined. But she had no choice.

So Sita courageously took a deep breath and glanced at Lord Ram for the last time so as to etch his image so firmly in her heart that though she may never be able to see her beloved again in life, his image would be eternally enshrined in her temple-like heart where she would continue to adore him for the rest of her life!

Sita was so enchanted and enamoured by the bewitching image of Lord Ram and decided in the heart of her innerself that if there is anyone whom she would ever adore and love in life it would be Lord Ram. So, given the uncertainties she faced due to the condition laid down by her father whereby her future was hinged to the bow, she decided to play it safe by bringing in Lord Ram and giving him a permanent abode in her heart, a place where she would be able to keep the Lord secretly locked-in for the rest of her life even if she was not able to marry him, and it was such a secure sanctuary because no one else except her own self would know about the Lord's abode there. A paper portrait or any other token means of remembrance could be snatched away from her if it was discovered in her possession, but an image that is etched on the wall of her heart and the canvas of her thoughts cannot be detected and deleted by anyone no matter how hard he or she spies on Sita.]

दो०. देखन मिस मृग बिहग तरु फिरइ बहोरि बहोरि ।
निरखि निरखि रघुबीर छबि बाढ़इ प्रीति न थोरि ॥ २३४ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhana misa mga bihaga taru phira'i bahōri bahōri.
nirakhi nirakhi raghubīra chabi bāṛha'i prīti na thōri. 234.

As Sita went back (towards the temple of goddess Parvati), she repeatedly glanced back on the pretext of seeing some wonderful deer, birds and trees. Each time she looked back she had a beautiful vision of Raghuvir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty), and each sight further stoked her love and affection for the Lord; the more she saw of Lord Ram the more besotted and enamoured she became. (Doha no. 234)

[Note—Sita found a ruse to look back and glance at her beloved Lord for the last time. If she had turned back and looked directly in the direction where the two brothers were standing, it would have given her friends more chance to tease her; it would have created a sort of scandal. So she found an excuse—there were a large number of wonderful deer, birds and trees in the garden; all were very fascinating. Sita cheerfully looked here and there pretending to watch them on her way back to the temple. But her real intention was to glance back at the place where Lord Ram and Laxman were standing.

She moved a little ahead and then retraced her steps to see this deer, or that bird or tree. From the corners of her eyes she kept on looking at Lord Ram; her maids had no idea where she was actually looking at. So this saved Sita from more embarrassment.]

चौ०. जानि कठिन सिवचाप बिसूरति । चली राखि उर स्यामल मूरति ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jāni kaṭhina siva cāpa bisūratī. calī rākhi ura syāmala mūrati. 1.

Feeling depressed that the bow of Lord Shiva is exceptionally heavy to lift and hard to break, she (Sita) went away with a heavy heart, enshrining the lovely dark-coloured image (of Lord Ram) in her (temple-like) heart. (1)

[Note—Sita knew that her fate is irrevocably tied to Lord Shiva's bow —anyone who lifts, strings and breaks it would marry her. But this bow was very difficult to tackle—it was heavy, hard—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.

It was mystical as well in the sense that unless Lord Shiva wants it to move or break no power on earth would be able to do so—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 258.

Countless strong and powerful warriors had assembled to try their luck at tackling this bow. As compared to them Lord Ram was very delicate and tender, not only in age but also in physical features. So Sita guessed that if anyone of these warriors weren't able to break the bow then it is impossible to imagine that Lord Ram would ever be able to do it. Consequentially, the chances of her ever marrying Ram were next to nil—except of course if Lord Shiva so wants, and if some miracle happens by a stroke of good luck favouring her.

So she decided to request goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, to be sepecially kind, gracious and considerate on this occasion and interceded on her behalf to persuade her husband, Shiva, to make things happen in such a way that the impossible can happen—i.e. no one should be able to move the bow, and then, as a last resort, her father may ask Lord Ram to make an attempt, at which the bow would voluntarily break because Lord Shiva would order it to do so. Sita's prayers to goddess Parvati that follow below clearly indicate this. Refer: (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 236. Her earnest prayers were heard by the goddess, and she expressly assured Sita that her wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8. (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 257.

Parvati had undergone this emotional trauma in her personal life as well. She had to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) and undergo most difficult tests to obtain the hands of Lord Shiva in marriage. Her parents did not like the union in the beginning because Shiva was a renunciate ascetic who lived a life of dispassion and without any worldly comfort worth the name with him. No parent would like to marry their daughter to such a person. So, Parvati could empathise with Sita more than anyone else. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101 which elaborately describe the marriage of Shiva with Parvati and the trauma she has to bear to fulfill her wish to marry Shiva.]

प्रभु जब जात जानकी जानी । सुख सनेह सोभा गुन खानी ॥ २ ॥

परम प्रेममय मृदु मसि कीन्ही । चारु चित भीतीं लिखि लीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

prabhu jaba jāta jānakī jānī. sukha sanēha sōbhā guna khānī. 2.

parama prēmamaya mṛdu masi kīnhī. cāru cinā bhītīm likhi līnhī. 3.

When Lord Ram saw that Janki, the daughter of king Janak (i.e. Sita) who was an image of bliss, affection, beauty and virtues, was going back [2], he painted her marvelous image on the wall (canvas) of his heart by using the soft ink of immense love for her [3]. (2-3)

[Note—Sita too had done the same thing—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234, and (iii) finally once again in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 235.

So we observe that both Lord Ram and Sita had fallen deeply in love with each other. At the time of the actual breaking of the bow, while Sita was fervently praying to gods and goddesses as well as the bow itself, Lord Ram had first looked directly at Sita and then decided to make the final resolute move to lift and break the bow—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 261.

An important observance can be made here. Sita had “enshrined the image of Lord Ram by bringing it inside her heart and closing shut its doors” (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232), while Lord Ram has “used the ink of love to make a portrait of Sita on the walls of his heart” (refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 235). Now, one may forget about something that one has brought in the house and kept it safely somewhere, but one will remember it if he has written about it in his personal diary.

This is exactly what is meant here and had actually happened. During the period just before the actual breaking of the bow, Sita was nervous and had forgotten what goddess Parvati had assured her in the temple—that her wishes would be fulfilled and she will get the groom of her choice (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda that precede Doha no. 236). Sita had prayed fervently to this god and that goddess (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257), losing confidence in the power of true love by the virtue of which she had so meticulously brought in the image of Lord Ram in her heart and had shut the door earlier.

On the other hand, Lord Ram maintained his cool and poise because he was certain of the inherent formidable power that the good-old virtue of true love possesses, a power that no force in world can ever resist and neutralise. Refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261.]

गई भवानी भवन बहोरी । बंदि चरन बोली कर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

ga'ī bhavānī bhavana bahōrī. bandi carana bōlī kara jōrī. 4.

Meanwhile, Sita went to the temple of Bhavani (goddess Parvati), knelt down before the goddess and offered her obeisance at the goddess' feet. Then she held her hands together and prayed to the goddess. (4)

[Note— Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/72 also.

Sita had fallen at the feet of the goddess as a gesture of earnest and urgent request as well as of total surrender. When one falls down or kneels down before an Authority, the latter is morally obliged to listen to the prayer or petition of the person who has submitted himself to this Authority. So when Sita knelt before goddess Parvati to place her petition before her—which was to ask the goddess to ensure that she marries the prince she has begun to love and whose image she has enshrined in her heart, leaving no place for anyone else—the goddess was obliged to kindly consider her pleas favourably.]

जय जय गिरिबरारज किसोरी । जय महेस मुख चंद चकोरी ॥ ५ ॥

जय गजबदन षडानन माता । जगत जननि दामिनि दुति गाता ॥ ६ ॥

jaya jaya giribaraṛāja kisōrī. jaya mahēsa mukha canda cakōrī. 5.
jaya gajabadana ṣaḍānana mātā. jagata janani dāmini duti gātā. 6.

Sita prayed—‘Glory to you oh goddess Girija, the daughter of the king of the mountains (i.e. goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva)!¹ Glory to you who has the privilege of constantly looking at the enchanting face of Lord Shiva much like the female bird ‘Chakori’ (Indian red-legged partridge) who intently watches the full moon with intense love for it in her heart.’² (5)

Glory to you who are the mother of gods Ganesh (‘Gajbadan’) and Kartikeya (‘Shadaanan’)³! You are the Mother Goddess of this world⁴, and your body is splendorous and radiant with a divine glow. (6)

[Note—¹By reminding Parvati about her past when she was born as a daughter in the household of the king of mountains, had determined to marry Lord Shiva when sage Narad had told her parents that she was destined to be the consort of the Lord, and had to do undergo the severest form of Tapa and physical sufferings in order to fulfill her wishes that she is eternally dedicated to Lord Shiva and no one else, Sita intended to implore upon the goddess to help her as she was facing the same dilemma and piquant situation in her life as the goddess had faced in her own life earlier. This would naturally make the goddess sympathetic to her situation and help her in all possible ways so that she is finally able to have the hands of Lord Ram in marriage and be the Lord’s partner in life.

²The bird Chakor is famed for its love for the moon. By citing this example Sita wished to convey to the goddess that like the case of her own self when she finds eternal happiness and bliss by constantly watching the face of her beloved husband Lord Shiva, she (Sita) also wished to spend the rest of her life watching the beautiful face of Lord Ram. So, will goddess Parvati please help her? Since she loves Lord Shiva so much, is it not possible for her to prevail upon her husband, Shiva, to kindly pay attention to the emotional torments faced by Sita and help her by making it so happen that the bow is broken by no one else but Lord Ram? Surely goddess Parvati can do this if she is pleased.

³Lords Ganesh and Kartikeya are the two sons of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Ganesh is called ‘Gajanan’ because he has the head of an elephant, and Kartikeya is called ‘Shadaanan’ because he has six mouths. Ganesh is regarded as the chief amongst Gods, and is offered first worship during rituals. He is said to be very wise and erudite. Kartikeya is the chief of the army of Gods. A detailed note on Ganesh has been appended below to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 257.

By placing Ganesh ahead of Kartikeya, Sita showed her wisdom—that she was well aware that he was God who is always worshipped before others, and that he is the fulfiller of all wishes. So, goddess Parvati being the mother of Lord Ganesh, she is all the more obliged and competent to fulfill Sita’s wishes.

Kartikeya is the chief of the army of Shiva as well as of the Gods in general. So by invoking him Sita implied that if goddess Parvati wants she can instruct her son Kartikeya to ward off all evil spirits and opposing stars that might play spoil-sport and ruin Sita’s future happiness by not allowing her to be married to Lord Ram. Kartikeya and Ganesh should work together so that Sita’s future is auspicious, her wishes are fulfilled, and Lord Ram can obtain victory in the fierce battle that would rage for her in the arena of the bow-breaking ceremony.

⁴Goddess Parvati is also known as ‘Maha-devi’, the Great Goddess. She is the ‘Mother’ of this world because Lord Shiva, her divine husband, is the ‘Maha-deva’, the Great God who is regarded as the Father of creation.

नहिं तव आदि मध्य अवसाना । अमित प्रभाउ बेदु नहिं जाना ॥ ७ ॥

भव भव बिभव पराभव कारिनि । बिस्व बिमोहनि स्वबस बिहारिनि ॥ ८ ॥

nahim tava ādi madhya avasānā. amita prabhā'u bēdu nahim jānā. 7.

bhava bhava bibhava parābhava kārini. bisva bimōhani svabasa bihārini. 8.

There is no beginning, middle or an end of your divine form. Your influence and powers are immeasurable and infinite; even the Vedas are unable to fathom them and describe them. (7)

You are the one who creates, sustains and concludes this creation. You are the one who casts her veil of delusions over this world and keep it enthralled. You are independent in all respects, and move in this world freely as you wish. (8)

[Note—This is a perfect portrait of the Supreme Being known in the scriptures as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the all-pervading, all-encompassing, invisible and cosmic form of the Lord. Mother Goddess is this Viraat Purush’s ‘Shakti’ or dynamic aspect. The Lord uses his ‘Shakti’ to carry out all his cosmic functions—creation, sustenance and conclusion. This Shakti is also known as ‘Maya’ or the delusion creating power of Brahm, the Supreme Being. It is this Maya that keeps the world spinning like a wheel endlessly.

Brahm’s cosmic Shakti is as infinite as the sky. Its powers and energy are endless. It represents the dynamism and energy of Brahm that acts like an invisible dynamo that powers all activity in this creation.

Now, Sita invokes all these qualities of goddess Parvati to inspire her to become active, realise her immense potentials, and utilise her cosmic abilities to fulfill her small wish—which is to make Lord Ram her partner for life. If she wants, Parvati, being the Supreme Goddess, can very conveniently and easily do it; it is within her capabilities. She can for instance cast her deluding veil on all the competing warriors so that none of them would be able to lift and break the bow; she can make the bow heavy when others begin lifting it and make it feather-light when Lord Ram tries his hand on it. She can turn the mind of her father so that he may ask Sita for her views, and then tamper with his vows and tweak them to somehow accommodate her.

By telling the goddess that “she is independent in her moves in the world” Sita indicated to her that she (the goddess) too had independently decided to marry Lord Shiva in spite of advice given to the contrary by the seven celestial sages known as the Saptarishis—refer: Baal Kand (i) from Doha no. 77—to Doha no. 81, and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 89—to Doha no. 90.

Therefore, she must also help her (Sita) because she also wants to chart an independent path for her self much against the wishes of her father.

There is another way of interpreting this statement—it may mean that Sita requests goddess Parvati that like her, she (Sita) too should be granted permission to move freely in life with the partner of her choice. If Parvati had chosen Shiva then, let Sita choose Lord Ram now!]

दो०. पतिदेवता सुतीय महुँ मातु प्रथम तव रेख ।
महिमा अमित न सकहिं कहि सहस सारदा सेष ॥ २३५ ॥

dōhā.

patidēvatā sutiya mahum' mātu prathama tava rēkha.
mahimā amita na sakahim kahi sahasa sārādā sēṣa. 235.

Oh Mother! Among all the virtuous women who regard their husbands as a personified form of God (and give them due respect befitting this stature), you are counted first—i.e. you head this list, you are the best amongst such women. Thousands of Saraswatis (goddess of speech and knowledge) and the legendary serpent with thousands of heads (and therefore thousands of tongues and mouths), known as Seshnath, are unable (or rather 'would be unable') to sing and praise your immense and infinite glories and virtues¹. (Doha no. 235)

[Note—In Hinduism, the husband is a woman's most precious and adorable asset in this life. She is expected to show him the greatest of respect as she would show to a revered God. Sage Atri's wife named Anusuiya has also outlined the duties of a good woman when Sita met her in the sage's hermitage where Lord Ram had gone during his 14-year forest exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Sortha no. 5 and the entire length of Chaupais that precede it.

Sita has cited three sources which together can't sufficiently praise the glories and powers and abilities of goddess Parvati, the cosmic Mother Goddess—the Vedas, goddess Saraswati, and Seshnath, the thousand-hooded serpent who holds the earth aloft. This is to stress the immensity and profundity of the goddess' glories. The 'Vedas' pertain to the wisdom of the terrestrial world, the earth; goddess Saraswati represents the heavenly Gods, and Seshnath stands for the wise ones who live in the subterranean world or the nether world. In other words, no one is able to sufficiently praise goddess Parvati's great glories.

¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 342 that employ the same metaphor to stress on the immensity of Lord Ram's glories and virtues when king Janak has praised the Lord.]

चौ०. सेवत तोहि सुलभ फल चारी । बरदायनी पुरारि पिआरी ॥ १ ॥
देबि पूजि पद कमल तुझारे । सुर नर मुनि सब होहिं सुखारे ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sēvata tōhi sulabha phala cārī. baradāyanī purārī pi'ārī. 1.
dēbi pūji pada kamala tumhārē. sura nara muni saba hōhim sukhārē. 2.

Oh the one who bestows boons and is very dear to Purari (Lord Shiva)! By serving you the server (i.e. your devotee) is blessed with the four legendary rewards of life (which are—'Artha' or material prosperity, 'Dharma' or religious merit, 'Kaam' or fulfilment of desires, and 'Moksha' or spiritual liberation). (1)

Oh Goddess! By worshipping your lotus-feet, the Gods, the humans and the great sages find contentment and bliss. (2)

[Note—Sita shows her prudence in the way she prays—first she extols the glories of goddess Parvati, and now she praises her benevolent and magnanimous nature, rounding up the praise by saying that her worship rewards everyone—the gods, the ordinary humans and the learned sages.

This prepares the ground for submitting Sita's actual wish before the goddess. The prayer is cleverly worded to ensure that the goddess would be compelled to think over the submission many times over before rejecting it if she prefers to neglect it, because if that happens (i.e. if she decides not to concede Sita's requests) then it will go against the very virtues for which this goddess is famed and worshipped. Therefore, the chances of her accepting Sita's requests are great.

Lord Shiva is known as 'Purari' because he had slain the demon named Tripura. To emphasise the fact that the affection and love between Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati is mutual and not one sided, Sita stresses here that "Parvati is very dear to Shiva". Previously she has already highlighted the immensity of Parvati's love for Shiva when she had said that "you affectionately look at Shiva's face just like the Chakori looks at the full moon"—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 235.

The implication is simple and obvious—Sita wishes to convey to the goddess that the love and affection between her self and Lord Ram is mutual just like the case between the goddess and Shiva. This is very evidently borne out by the narration in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 229—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 235. Hence, the goddess must pay heed to Sita's pleadings and concede to her requests.]

मोर मनोरथु जानहु नीकें । बसहु सदा उर पुर सबही कें ॥ ३ ॥

कीन्हैउँ प्रगट न कारन तेहीं । अस कहि चरन गहे बैदेहीं ॥ ४ ॥

mōra manōrathu jānahu nīkēm. basahu sadā ura pura sabahī kēm. 3.
kīnhē'um' pragaṭa na kārana tēhīm. asa kahi carana gahē baidēhīm. 4.

You are well aware of the wishes of my heart—because you dwell in the heart of all living beings and no thoughts are secret from you. (3)

This is the reason why I have not expressed my wish clearly and have refrained from disclosing it openly in public.'

Saying this, Sita ('baidēhīm') caught hold of the divine feet of the goddess Parvati (as an emotional gesture of abject surrender and earnest request that one makes to an Authority in emergency situations of life and death). (4)

[Note—Sita was very desperate and vexed. It was a last chance for her to plead with and please the goddess to intercede on her behalf and fulfill her wishes of marrying Lord Ram, because later in the day and the day following her fate would be sealed for all times to come. If something was to be done by the goddess, then it must be done today before it is too late. This answers the urgency in her pleas and demeanours.

The goddess is supposed to be all-knowing and omniscient. Being so, it would be superfluous and irrelevant to tell her in articulate terms what was in Sita's mind and heart. The lesson we draw from this particular event is that one must pray to one's Lord God silently, with lips closed because the Lord God knows very well what his devotee wants. Then, everything else should be left in the hands of the Lord God, giving the latter

a free hand to decide what is good for his devoted worshipper. The odds are stacked high in favour of a positive decision by the Lord, a decision that would be for the long-term good of the worshipper.

So, after saying her prayers, Sita clasped the holy feet of the goddess to surrender completely to the goddess' wish. Now it was up to the deity to listen to and answer the prayers and pleadings of her devotee. This happens quickly as we shall read below. This is another lesson that we learn: if our prayers are sincere and from the inner depth of the heart, then not only we do not need to say our wishes to the Lord God in clear words as if the latter does not know them but we must be sure that our prayers are being heard, considered and answered by the Lord God with a positive attitude.

Sita did not articulate her wish to marry Lord Ram out of shyness. Remember that her companions were closely watching her. If the goddess is all-knowing and all-pervading, she is bound to know what Sita thinks and feels.

By citing the instance of gods, humans and great sages finding bliss and happiness by worshipping the holy feet of the goddess (refer: Chaupai line no. 2 above), Sita implies that since she too has worshipped the goddess' feet and has surrendered herself at the feet, the goddess must honour her reputation by making her blissful and happy too.]

बिनय प्रेम बस भई भवानी । खसी माल मूरति मुसुकानी ॥ ५ ॥

सादर सियँ प्रसादु सिर धरेऊ । बोली गौरि हरषु हियँ भरेऊ ॥ ६ ॥

binaya prēma basa bha'ī bhavānī. khasī māla mūrati musukānī. 5.
sādara siyam' prasādu sira dharē'ū. bōlī gauri haraṣu hiyam' bharē'ū. 6.

Goddess Bhavani (Parvati; the divine consort of Bhava, Lord Shiva's another name) was extremely pleased by the humble and polite prayers of Sita as well as the love and affection that she showed towards the goddess¹.

The garland around her image slid down (as a token of the goddess offering it as 'Prasad' or divine blessing to Sita who was lying at her feet)². And the image of the goddess smiled benevolently³. (5)

Sita devotedly and with a lot of reverence picked up this Prasad (the blessing of the garland) and put it on her head as a mark of the greatest respect towards the goddess, as well as a welcoming sign that the goddess is pleased with her.

Then, Gauri (goddess Parvati) spoke with a cheerful heart. (6)

[Note—¹Three forms of devotion and worship ('Bhakti') are depicted here in the incident of Sita praying to goddess Parvati—(i) physical worship by Sita falling at the feet of the goddess and clasping them reverentially; (ii) worship by speech that Sita does when she offers oral prayers; and (iii) subtle form of devotion that manifested in the way of Sita having great affection for the goddess and her praying to her silently without actually expressing her desires.

²An image does not move in physical terms. But a consecrated image of a deity is supposed to harbour life in a very subtle and sublime form. Though the consecrated image of a revered god or goddess is made of worldly material things such as a stone or wood or metal, but it is not lifeless and gross like the sample kept in a museum. This image in a temple has the relevant deity's divine qualities present in it in a very subtle and atomic form. Even as the actual deity is invisible to the eye, these qualities in the consecrated image are also invisible to the lay person's eyes, and under the veil of delusions he begins to see this image as being as lifeless and gross as the sample in a

museum. But for devotees, for the wise and learned ones, this image is a manifested form of the revered deity—and if the devotee’s devotion, faith, belief and conviction is firm and unwavering, then this very idol begins to exhibit all signs of divinity that the original deity does.

Hence, since Sita had the greatest faith in goddess Parvati and saw her presence in the image or the idol in the temple, this image rewarded her faith and conviction by exhibiting signs of life—giving Sita the garland, and beginning to speak.

There is a remarkable point to note here: the goddess’ words were heard by Sita as well as by her companions—refer: Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 236 below. It was Sita who had prayed, and none of her companions. But when the goddess spoke everyone heard it. This proves that Sita was not hallucinating; she was not hearing imaginary voices under delusions.

The physical incident of falling of the garland was interpreted by Sita correctly as a blessing by the goddess and a sign that the latter is pleased with her. For the rest of her companions it must have been a mere coincidence that the garland snapped and fell down at the instant when Sita was lying at the feet of the goddess, though it was an auspicious sign.

³The same logic applies here. The image of the goddess was crafted in a way that it had a perpetual smile on her face. But for Sita, this smile assumed a significant contour and delivered a special message—something her companions could not decipher. So while Sita could actually see the goddess smile, the rest of the maids did not see anything significant.

Later on in the story we shall read that when Sita prayed to the holy river Ganges for the well-being of her self, Lord Ram and Laxman while they were on their way to the forest, the deity of the river replied to her and blessed her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 103—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.

In Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali” also we read that Parvati has blessed Sita in passionate term, telling her that all her wishes would be fulfilled. Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/72, stanza nos. 2-3.]

सुनु सिय सत्य असीस हमारी । पूजिहि मन कामना तुझारी ॥ ७ ॥
नारद बचन सदा सुचि साचा । सो बरु मिलिहि जाहिं मनु राचा ॥ ८ ॥

sunu siya satya asīsa hamārī. pūjihi mana kāmanā tumhārī. 7.
nārada bacana sadā suci sēcā. sō baru milihi jāhim manu rēcā. 8.

The Goddess said—‘Listen Sita to my blessings. I honour your wishes. (7)

Sage Narad’s words are always true (and I have experience of it)¹. Hence, be certain that you will get the groom whom you wish in your heart². (8)

[Note—¹Parvati was told by Narad that Shiva is destined to be her husband, and in spite of all odds stacked high against this prophesy, it turned out to be true. This entire episode is narrated in Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 66—to Doha no. 98.

Therefore, goddess Parvati has had a first hand experience of how Narad’s words come true. In the case of Sita, Narad had also foretold that she would be married to Lord Ram, and hence it can’t go wrong. Sita was aware of this prophesy of Narad—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 229.

One thing worth noting here is that goddess Parvati is blessing Sita to reassure her that she need not worry at all because notwithstanding the goddess' blessings, her wishes of being betrothed to Lord Ram is bound to come true as it has already been prophesised by Narad, and the words of this sage never go in vain because he always speaks the truth.

²Remember: Sita had not expressed her wishes in articulate words before the goddess, and therefore goddess reciprocated her sentiments by also not disclosing what she has accepted, except to say that she (the goddess) honours Sita's wishes. This was a privileged communication between the devotee and her deity.]

छं०. मनु जाहिं राचेउ मिलिहि सो बरु सहज सुंदर साँवरो । १ ।

करुना निधान सुजान सीलु सनेहु जानत रावरो ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

manu jāhiṁ rācē'u milihi sō baru sahaja sundara sām̐varō. 1.

karunā nidhāna sujāna sīlu sanēhu jānata rāvarō. 2.

Be sure and rest assured that you will get the groom of your choice; the prince who is naturally handsome and dark-complexioned with whom your heart has found fondness, with whom you are enamoured, is sure to be your groom.

He (the groom, Lord Ram) is an ocean of grace and mercy, and is indeed wise and a thorough gentleman. He is well aware of your unstinted love and affection for him, as well as your virtuous qualities.' (Chanda no. 1)

[Note—Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati and had said that “the goddess is all-knowing as she resides in the heart of all living beings, and therefore Sita does not wish to tell her desire to the goddess in articulate words”. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 above that precede this Chanda.

Since the goddess lives in the heart, she has become aware that Sita has already enshrined the marvelous dark-complexioned image of Lord Ram in her temple-like heart, and has shut its doors so that no one can steal this image from her and also to ensure that no other image can come in to replace Lord Ram's image. This is why the goddess has clearly said that “Sita will get the dark-complexioned prince, whose image she has so lovingly installed in her heart, as her groom”.

What was the necessity for the goddess to outline the important qualities of Lord Ram? Well, Sita had fallen head-over-heels in love of Lord Ram, but she had no way to ascertain what sort of a man he was, what character he had, what his hidden qualities were. That means she may have had certain doubts deep inside her mind. Hence, the all-knowing goddess was aware of this too, so she prudently decided to remove them once and for all by expressly telling Sita that her groom was a thorough gentleman, gracious, merciful and wise. He was all-knowing and omniscient as well—because he knew that she (Sita) loved him. This last statement was intended to assure Sita that she can expect reciprocal affection even after marriage.

An interesting thing that we note in the events in the garden is that while Sita has expressed her clear desire to have Lord Ram as her groom, which is clear from goddess Parvati's assurance to her to this effect in these verses, Lord Ram has neither here nor later said anything of this kind. When the Lord returns to sage Vishwamitra with the flowers that the two brothers had plucked from the garden for his worship rituals, the Lord has simply told the sage everything that happened in the garden, without making

any specific request or prayer to the sage to bless him so that the desire of his heart is fulfilled like Sita had prayed to Parvati, though of course it is undeniable that even Lord Ram had wanted to marry Sita. But in spite of the Lord not saying anything expressly, the wise sage could read what was in the Lord's mind. So, the sage blessed the Lord, saying that his wishes would be fulfilled. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 237.

Here, Sita is like the 'Jiva', the living being, and Lord Ram of course is the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Being. A time comes in life when the Jiva and the Parmatma are face to face with each other. The Jiva should then recognise his or her Lord; if this chance is lost then it is lost for good. The Parmatma welcomes the Jiva with an open arm, but the Jiva must have a burning desire to meet the Lord and surrender him/herself to him for the rest of his/her life. In other words, it is the Jiva who has to step forward to express a sincere desire to attain the Lord, and while the Lord is welcoming he must make sure that this desire is honest and truthful.

In the case of Sita, Lord Ram had tested her will and sincerity before actually accepting her by breaking the bow. First in the garden itself the Lord observed her trance-like state as soon as they met, then he observed how she was looking back over her shoulders to have a last glimpse of the Lord, then the way she begged goddess Parvati to bless her. Later on, at the time of the actual breaking of the bow, the Lord had waited for some time to closely observe the emotions of Sita and her facial expressions, and when he determined that she was on the verge of collapse if he delayed a little longer, he grabbed the bow and broke it in an instant—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 that wonderfully describe those delicate moments of make-or-break.

What conclusion do we draw from this? Well, the inference is clear: If the creature, the living being, is sincere in his heart to attain the Lord, he should be rest assured that his desires would be fulfilled. But at the same time he should be prepared to pass a tough test. It's not possible to cheat upon the Supreme Lord like the way one cheats the world by external pretensions and use of clever words.]

एहि भाँति गौरि असीस सुनि सिय सहित हियँ हरषीं अली । ३ ।
तुलसी भवानिहि पूजि पुनि पुनि मुदित मन मंदिर चली ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bhām̐ti gauri asīsa suni siya sahita hiyaṁ̐ haraṣīm̐ alī. 3.
tulasī bhavānihi pūji puni puni mudita mana mandira calī. 4.

Hearing this blessing of Gauri (goddess Parvati), Sita and her friends felt very glad in their hearts. Tulsidas says Sita worshipped and paid her obeisance to the goddess repeatedly, and after that she headed back to her palace with a lot of cheer and bliss in her heart. (Chanda no. 2)

[Note—Tulsidas was a very clever, sagacious and erudite author. He was expert with words, and crafted his narration in such a way that at many places one can interpret a stanza in different ways.

For instance, line no. 2 of this stanza has the word “Tulsidas” so strategically placed that besides the meaning given above this line may also mean—“Tulsidas joins Sita in repeatedly thanking and worshipping goddess Parvati, and pleading with her that Sita gets the dark-complexioned groom. After the prayers, Sita headed for her palace with a cheerful heart”.]

सो०. जानि गौरि अनुकूल सिय हिय हरषु न जाइ कहि ।
मंजुल मंगल मूल बाम अंग फरकन लगे ॥ २३६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

jāni gauri anukūla siya hiya haraṣu na jā'i kahi.
mañjula maṅgala mūla bāma aṅga pharakana lagē. 236.

Realizing that goddess Gauri (Parvati) is favourable towards her, the happiness, the contentedness and bliss in Sita's heart was so immense that it cannot be described or spoken of in words.

As a sign of auspicious future, the organs on the left side of her body began fluttering. (Sortha/Doha no. 236)

[Note—This Sortha, which is a sort of Doha, concludes the narration of Sita coming to the garden to offer worship to goddess Parvati to request the latter to grant her a suitable groom, and returning home with a bag-full of fulfilled wishes by way of an assurance from the goddess that she will get a husband whom she desires.

What a wonderful way of winding up the worship ritual—a devotee coming to his or her deity with an empty bag of hopes and expectations, and returning with this bag filled according to his or her wishes!]

चौ०. हृदयँ सराहत सीय लोनाई । गुर समीप गवने दोउ भाई ॥ १ ॥
राम कहा सबु कौसिक पाहीं । सरल सुभाउ छुअत छल नाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hdayam̐ sarāhata sīya lōnā'ī. gura samīpa gavanē dō'u bhā'ī. 1.
rāma kahā sabu kausika pāhīm̐. sarala subhā'u chu'ata chala nāhīm̐. 2.

Lauding and extolling the bewitching beauty and the extraordinary charm of Sita in their hearts, the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) returned to their Guru (sage Vishwamitra).

(1)

Lord Ram did not hide anything from Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra), and narrated everything as it happened to him. This is because Ram had no guilt in his conscience and was free from any mental taints. (2)

[Note—These two lines are very important for removing any doubts in the mind of the reader about the character of the two brothers. For a modern man who knows only the grosser aspects of creation, the incident of the garden is like a fairy-tale romance between a prince and a princess wherein both fall in love with each other. Though it is undeniable that it did happen, but there wasn't an element of physical passion and lust in it. It was a divine love—it was an eternal love between two souls that were separated by the physical world; it was a reiteration of an eternal bond between two individuals that had existed earlier also, and that went beyond the present life. This is proved by the fact that sage

Narad had already predicted that Sita would be betrothed to Lord Ram—refer: (i) Doha no. 229, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 236.

Sita had known this, but what about Lord Ram? By telling everything to sage Vishwamitra the Lord came out clean; he had nothing to hide; there was no deceit. Only when a man's heart is free of moral corruption will he gather courage to tell his elders about such personal experiences as witnessed by the Lord in the garden which, on the face of it, smacks of worldly grossness and passion. Ordinarily a boy would make all sorts of attempts to hide such an incident, but the two brothers had no taint in their pure heart, and therefore disclosed everything to the sage voluntarily.

There is another important reason for telling the Guru whatever happened in the garden. Lord Ram had subtly wanted to inform the sage that he is enamoured with Sita and would prefer if things turn favourable and he is given a chance to marry her. This message was important because it would give the sage a free hand to find a chance where he would order Lord Ram to break the bow and marry Sita. This was a very sensitive matter of the heart, and a personal thing as well. The Lord did not expect the sage to openly ask him if he would like to marry Sita; that would look very indecent and improper. The Lord also knew about the sage's immense mystical powers—so by subtly informing him that he has fallen in love with Sita and would welcome a chance to marry her, the Lord gave a clear signal to the sage to employ his mystical powers to maneuver things in his favour.

We have already read how Sita had prayed to Parvati to make it possible for her to marry Lord Ram. Sita knew about the great powers that the goddess possessed, besides the fact that she was the divine consort of Lord Shiva whose bow was to be broken. Thus, if Parvati wished she can turn things to favour Sita. This is exactly what Lord Ram might have thought while disclosing his experience to sage Vishwamitra—he knew that the sage had mighty powers and if he wanted he can make things happen in such a way that Sita is married to the Lord.

The sage was very wise and prudent. We will read soon that during the bow breaking event, when nobody could as much as move the bow an inch, sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to get up and break the bow. This helped to maintain decorum and dignity of the Lord; it showed to the assembly that Lord Ram had broken the bow only on the instructions of the great sage Vishwamitra, and that otherwise he wasn't eyeing to marry Sita. This sequence of events pre-empted all tongues from wagging and spreading a scandal. After all, once the sage had given the order, Lord Ram had no choice but to obey it. The Lord could not say 'no', for it would be utter disobedience of the sage and something unthinkable. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254.]

सुमन पाइ मुनि पूजा कीन्ही । पुनि असीस दुहु भाइन्ह दीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥
सुफल मनोरथ होहुँ तुझारे । रामु लखनु सुनि भए सुखारे ॥ ४ ॥

sumana pā'i muni pūjā kīnhī. puni asīsa duhu bhā'inha dīnhī. 3.
suphala manōratha hōhum̐ tumhārē. rāmu lakhānu suni bha'ē sukhārē. 4.

When the sage received the flowers brought by the two brothers, he performed his worship ritual. After that he blessed the two brothers. (3)

The sage blessed them by saying 'let your hopes be fulfilled'. Hearing these words of the sage, Lord Ram and Laxman felt very happy and contented. (4)

[Note—The two brothers had gone to the royal garden to bring flowers for the sage. So when they returned, the sage completed his worship.

At the time of his worship the sage requested the deity he worshipped to fulfill the wishes of the two brothers because he was very obliged to them. The reason was that they had helped the sage complete his fire sacrifice by eliminating the demons who were constantly defiling it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210. So the sage wished to reward them, and what greater reward can he give them than fulfilling their wish.

Now, an interesting development has occurred here. The sage has blessed both the brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled. Of course we know that the wish of Lord Ram was to marry Sita; but what about Laxman? Well, Laxman was Lord Ram's younger brother, and he always respected Ram and his wishes. So there is no question of Laxman having any secret thoughts about Sita. All he wished was that his elder brother Ram could marry Sita so that he will also have a chance to see her and keep company with them for the rest of his life.

But it is also possible that Laxman had harboured an inner desire to marry along with Lord Ram. Though it was impossible for Laxman to marry Sita because his elder brother Lord Ram should be married first, there was all possibility that Laxman could be married to one of Sita's sisters. Laxman guessed, and guessed correctly, that if Sita is so beautiful then her sister would be also equally beautiful. As we shall see later on, this is exactly what happened: Laxman was married to Sita's sister named Urmila—refer: Baal Kand, line no. 1-2 of Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 325.

Like goddess Parvati blessing Sita that her wishes would be fulfilled, sage Vishwamitra also blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled.]

करि भोजनु मुनिबर बिग्यानी । लगे कहन कछु कथा पुरानी ॥ ५ ॥
बिगत दिवसु गुरु आयसु पाई । संध्या करन चले दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

kari bhōjanu munibara bigyānī. lagē kahana kachu kathā purānī. 5.
bigata divasu guru āyasu pā'ī. sandhyā karana calē dō'u bhā'ī. 6.

After taking their meals, the learned sage began to tell some story from the Purans (ancient mythological history of the Hindus) to pass time¹. (5)

At the end of the day, when twilight came, the two brothers took the Guru's permission and went out to perform their evening worship called 'Sandhya'. (6)

[Note—¹This was a standard practice with sages. After performing worship and taking their meals, they used to take rest for a while, and then in the afternoon hours they used to preach and listen to discourses revolving around ancient scriptures. This session continued till the time of sunset when they would perform their evening worship.]

प्राची दिसि ससि उयउ सुहावा । सिय मुख सरिस देखि सुखु पावा ॥ ७ ॥
बहुरि बिचारु कीन्ह मन माहीं । सीय बदन सम हिमकर नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

prācī disi sasi uya'u suhāvā. siya mukha sarisa dēkhi sukhu pāvā. 7.
bahuri bicāru kīnha mana māhīm. sīya badana sama himakara nāhīm. 8.

At that time a beautiful moon rose in the eastern direction (on the horizon in the eastern sky). Seeing that it resembled the face of Sita in its charm and beauty, Lord Ram felt happy and cheerful. (7)

But he had second thoughts in his heart: the 'Himkar' (the moon) was no match for Sita's face (or Sita's body—'sīya badana'; 'Siya' = Sita's, and 'Badan' = body, meaning here her full form). (8)

[Note—The moon had a full disc, and hence it was a full-moon night. The disc of a full moon has been traditionally used as a metaphor for beauty and bliss. So when Lord Ram first saw the moon he remembered Sita's face and likened it with her. But he immediately changed his thoughts when he started analyzing and comparing them. Though apparently the moon looked astoundingly beautiful, but it had some negative qualities in it, and therefore it would be inappropriate to compare it with the immaculacy of Sita.

What are some of the inherent defects with the moon? They are enumerated in the verses following below.

It should be carefully noted here that only the face of a woman of a noble family is visible to the onlooker as she is expected to keep the remaining part covered by her wearing apparel. This is a sign of modesty and good behaviour. So was the case with Sita; only her face was visible. When the poet says 'body' he means the face, and if the face is beautiful one deduces that the rest of her form would also be in the likeness of the face—because the 'face is the mirror of the person'.]

दो०. जनमु सिंधु पुनि बंधु बिषु दिन मलीन सकलंक ।
सिय मुख समता पाव किमि चंदु बापुरो रंक ॥ २३७ ॥

dōhā.

janamu sindhu puni bandhu biṣu dina malīna sakalaṅka.
siya mukha samatā pāva kimi candu bāpurō raṅka. 237.

'The moon has its birth from the ocean; it has poison as his sibling; its shine dims and vanishes from sight during the daytime; and its disc is marred by dark spots which are tantamount to some form of scar on its reputation.

Say, how can this poor and wretched moon ever be compared with the perfectly immaculate face of Sita? (Doha no. 237)

[Note—Legend has it that the moon was born when the celestial ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life. One of the things that were produced by this churning was a pot of severe poison known as Halaahal. Therefore, the moon has this poison as his sibling.

Though wonderful during the darkness of the night, its glory fades during the day under the more brilliant shine of the sun. This is not a fit comparison with Sita because she would stand out in a crowd as the finest lady on earth. No other lady would be able to eclipse Sita's beauty and charm with her own.

The face of the moon has dark spots whereas Sita's face is perfectly clean and shining radiantly.

Hence, to compare Sita's face with the moon would be wrong.]

चौ०. घटइ बढइ बिरहिनि दुखदाई । ग्रसइ राहु निज संधिहि पाई ॥ १ ॥
कोक सोकप्रद पंकज द्रोही । अवगुन बहुत चंद्रमा तोही ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

ghaṭa'i baṛha'i birahini dukhadā'ī. grasa'i rāhu nija sandhihiṃ pā'ī. 1.
kōka sōkaprada paṅkaja drōhī. avaguna bahuta candramā tōhī. 2.

The moon waxes and wanes throughout its life¹, its appearance gives a lot of emotional pain (torment) to those who are love-struck and separated from their beloved², and is devoured by the demon named Rahu when it crosses its path³. (1)

It torments the 'Koka' (or 'Chakravaak', the ruddy goose)⁴, and it is inimical to the lotus because the latter shrivels and withers on appearance of the moon⁵.

Therefore, oh Moon, you have a lot of defects or shortcomings⁶. (2)

[Note—¹The face of the moon does not constantly remain rounded—except for one night, it waxes and wanes for the rest of the month. It means that its beauty is unsteady and it goes on becoming lesser each night till it is completely surrounded by darkness on the dark-moon night. When the moon is personalised, this is used to indicate that its beauty and shine are reduced as it grows older, and finally its glories vanish on the dark-moon night. Nothing of the sort happens with Sita—the radiance and youthfulness of her face is ever so constant and brilliant.

There is an ancient story in the Purans about the face of the moon waxing and waning. It is narrated in Mahabharat, Shalya Parva, in the conversation between Vaishmpaayan and Janmanjai.

It is briefly as follows—Twenty-seven daughters of Prajaapti Daksha were married to the Moon God. They were called 'Nakshatra' or stars that shine around the moon. Out of them, Rohini was the most beautiful. That is why the Moon God spent the most of his time with her. The rest of the wives complained to their father, Daksha, about this partisan attitude of the Moon God who was expected to treat all of them equally.

Daksha summoned the Moon and requested him to treat all the wives equally and spend equal time with all of them. But the Moon did not pay heed, and so the other wives complained to their father Daksha once again that the Moon God is not obeying his instructions. Daksha once again summoned Moon and finally ordered him to treat all his wives equally, otherwise Daksha would curse him. But the Moon God still did not pay heed.

Angry, Daksha then created 'Yakshma' or the disease known as Tuberculosis. Yakshma entered the body of Moon. This disease began to eat into the innards of the Moon God, and over time the latter's glory and radiance began to fade. Since the Moon God was also responsible for nourishing herbs and medicinal plants, the latter's growth was stunted. Those which managed to germinate somehow had no taste or curative powers.

The Gods were alarmed as this would lead to annihilation of creation as no diseases would be cured, and people and animals would die like in the plague. So they approached Daksha and pleaded with him to neutralize the effects of his curse on the Moon God, for otherwise all the medicinal herbs would be destroyed.

Daksha replied—'If the Moon begins to treat all his wives, the Nakshatras, equally, and takes a bath in the river Saraswati on an auspicious occasion as a token of repentance, then his curse would be nullified and he would regain his lost health and

glory. But my curse cannot be permanently eliminated, so the Moon would be subjected to decrease in his radiance for half the month and increase for the next half. This will also help to keep him reminded about his duty towards all his wives, the Nakshatras.

Let him (Moon God) go to the shores of the western ocean where river Saraswati meets the ocean, and worship Lord Shiva there. This is the only way he will regain his lost glory and radiance.'

The Moon God, also known as 'Som', went to the designated pilgrim site known as Prabhaas Kshetra on the night of Amaawasya (dark moon night), and performed penance as advised by the Gods. Then he began to gradually regain his radiance till it reached its zenith on the full moon night known as Purnima.

When the moon attains its full health and vigour on the full moon night, the Gods begin to draw Amrit or the elixir of life that is stored in the body of the moon. This is why from the next day the moon begins to be reduced in shine and glory till everything stored is exhausted and it becomes dark. Once again, due to Lord Shiva's blessings, the moon begins to regain its glory till it reaches full on the full moon night.

This is a continuous cycle of creation and destruction as envisioned in the Purans in a symbolic manner. This also explains why the moon waxes and wanes constantly.

²Whereas the moon provides emotional support to love-struck couples who are together, it torments those who are separated. Hence, its value as an enhancer of love, provider of bliss and happiness, and an intensifier of emotions is doubtful. On the other hand, Sita always gives bliss and happiness to all when she is around; her presence is equally welcomed by those who are happy as well as those who are tormented.

³The moon is eclipsed when it is devoured by the mythical demon named Rahu. But no one dare eclipse the glory and the radiance of Sita.

The story of the moon being devoured by Rahu is briefly as follows— The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called 'Rahu' and the latter 'Ketu'. Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

The story of Rahu appears in Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Chapter 8, Canto 9. Actually however, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. This scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and

seers) who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says “When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon’s curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon’s disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments.”

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former’s view from the latter’s surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as ‘Ketu’ and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake’s hood.

⁴The male and female birds known as ‘Chakravaak’ or the ruddy goose stay together in the day, but as soon as night appears they separate from one another. They are not disturbed by the scorching sun during the daytime, but the wretched moon, though reputed to be cool and calm, is so unbearable for this bird that as soon as the moon appears in the sky they separate from one another. In other words, instead of creating an environment wherein two lovers come together, this fellow moon is a creator of nuisance so much so that its mere appearance terrifies the Charkavaak and the couple separate in the fear that their union would be disrupted by the moon as it may harm one of them and cause the partner’s death. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29.

⁵The moon also acts as a nuisance for the lotus. The lotus opens its petals at day-break and blooms, but as soon as night appears and the moon rises on the horizon the lotus closes. In other words, the lotus does not like to see the moon; it hates the moon. How ironical it is! The harmless bird Chakravaak is tormentd by the moon forcing the couple (the male and the female birds) to separate, and the lotus flower which is loved by all is also sneered at by the moon, forcing it to shut down its petals.

⁶There are three types of creatures in this world: those who live on land, those who live in the sky, and those who live in water. The moon does not refrain from tormenting all of them. It torments lovers who are separated—an instance of its hate for those who live on land. It torments the bird Chakravaak—an instance of its hate for those who live in the sky. It torments the lotus—an instance of its hate for those who live in water.

The moon, therefore, is a source of grief and pain to all sorts of living beings. This is not true with Sita—whose mere presence spreads cheer, happiness, joy and bliss. So, it is absolutely wrong and incredulous to even think of drawing a parallel between the two, Sita and the moon.]

बैदेही मुख पटतर दीन्हे । होइ दोषु बड़ अनुचित कीन्हे ॥ ३ ॥

सिय मुख छबि बिधु ब्याज बखानी । गुर पहिं चले निसा बड़ि जानी ॥ ४ ॥

baidēhī mukha paṭatara dīnhē. hō'i dōṣu baṛa anucita kīnhē. 3.
siya mukha chabi bidhu byāja bakhānī. gura pahir̃ calē nisā baḍi jānī. 4.

Comparing the moon with the face of Vaidehi (Sita) would therefore be very wrong and highly inappropriate. One would not like to be blamed for such foolishness (and surely I, Ram, would not commit this mistake).' (3)

Thus, finding in the moon a pretext for lauding the magnificent charm and beauty of Sita's face or countenance, and holding that she is far better than the Moon God himself, Lord Ram returned to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) because it was getting late in the night. (40)

[Note—To whom was Lord Ram speaking? Well, he was speaking to his younger brother Laxman. Remember: the two brothers had nothing to hide from each other. This is proved on two earlier occasions—(i) when Lord Ram first saw Sita in the garden, he told Laxman briefly about her: Refer:- from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231 which clearly endorse this point; and (ii) when the two brothers together told sage Vishwamitra everything about their meeting with Sita: Refer:- Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237.

Again, Lord Ram tells his inner thoughts to Laxman in Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 238. We shall be reading it below. We shall discover that on this occasion, Laxman has answered to his brother's emotional outpourings.

Laxman had kept quiet on the earlier occasion in the garden and had let Ram do the talking. Similarly here too Laxman quietly listened to the emotional outbursts of his elder brother.

Verse no. 4 says that “it was late in the night”—this shows that Lord Ram has spent quite a bit of time gazing at the moon and thinking of Sita, so love-struck was he.

Another reason for being late in the night was that first the two brothers had performed the evening worship known as ‘Sandhya’ which is best done after sunset. It must have taken some time. Then they sat down and begin to gaze at the full moon, so wonderful it looked in the sky. It was then that Lord Ram begin to think of Sita, and must have been so lost in his thoughts that he forgot how time passed.]

करि मुनि चरन सरोज प्रनामा । आयसु पाइ कीन्ह बिश्रामा ॥ ५ ॥

kari muni carana sarōja pranāmā. āyasu pā'i kīnha bīśrāmā. 5.

After returning to their Guru's place, the brothers bowed at the lotus-like feet of the sage. When the sage ordered them, they retired for the night. (5)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman had wished to massage the feet of their Guru as a token service that is standard practice for disciples. They had done this earlier also—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 226. But on that occasion it was not late in the night as it is on this present occasion. So the Guru ordered them to go to take rest immediately.]

बिगत निसा रघुनायक जागे । बंधु बिलोकि कहन अस लागे ॥ ६ ॥

उयउ अरुन अवलोकहु ताता । पंकज कोक लोक सुखदाता ॥ ७ ॥

bigata nisā raghunāyaka jāgē. bandhu bilōki kahana asa lāgē. 6.
uya'u aruna avalōkahu tātā. pañkaja kōka lōka sukhadātā. 7.

At the end of the night, Raghunaayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) woke up. When he saw his brother Laxman, he began to speak as follows—(60

‘Oh dear brother! Look, the sun has risen. It is a provider of cheer and happiness to the ‘Koka’ (the bird Chakravaak) as well as to the lotus¹. (7)

[Note—¹Refer explanation appended above to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Ram has not forgotten the two instances he had cited the previous night—the Chakravaak and the lotus. So he repeats it again. This shows that during the night he was thinking of Sita all the time.

But this time, Laxman cut him short; he interjected and used these two examples as metaphors to say how they stand for Lord Ram’s own glory and portend victory over adversaries in the battle of the bow to gain success in obtaining the hands of Sita in marriage. Let us read on and find out what Laxman says.]

बोले लखनु जोरि जुग पानी । प्रभु प्रभाउ सूचक मृदु बानी ॥ ८ ॥

bōlē lakhanu jōri juga pānī. prabhu prabhā'u sūcaka mṛdu bānī. 8.

Laxman joined the palms of his hands as a token gesture of respect and said politely—
‘Oh Lord! They (the bird Chakravaak and the lotus) stand for your glory and potentials.
(8)

[Note—It’s very interesting. Laxman feared that if he did not interject and cut his love-lorn elder brother short then he would launch into another lecture on some subject related to the sun, and compare its brilliance and stunning dazzle with Sita. So, despite cutting Lord Ram’s anticipated long-drawn lecture short, Laxman did not want to offend his elder brother whom he loved and respected highly. Therefore, he wisely found an excuse to politely turn the conversation away from another emotional outburst of Ram to something that would sound encouraging to him and motivate him to keep his spirits and hopes high as his wish of marrying Sita would surely be fulfilled.

We shall now read below how Laxman has compared the rising sun and its effect on the Chakravaak as well as the lotus with the rising glory of Lord Ram and the effect his presence has or would have on his devotees. Refer: Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 239 below.]

दो०. अरुनोदयँ सकुचे कुमुद उडगन जोति मलीन ।
जिमि तुह्जार आगमन सुनि भए नृपति बलहीन ॥ २३८ ॥

dōhā.

arunōdayam' sakucē kumuda uḍagana jōti malīna.
jimi tumhāra āgamana suni bha'ē nṛpati balahīna. 238.

With sun-rise, the lily has faded (i.e. it has closed its petals indicating lose of its vigour and glory), and the brightness of the stars have also dimmed and begun to gradually vanish altogether.

It is just like the case of your arrival (at the bow-breaking venue) that would make the assembled kings and princes shrivel up or shrink and lose their strength, valour, radiance and glory, reducing them to a lack-lustre assembly of defeated and dejected persons. (Doha no. 238)

[Note—Here, Laxman compares Lord Ram with the splendorous Sun. The sun's rising in the horizon is like Lord Ram's arrival at the venue of the bow ceremony. The shriveling of the lily is like the kings and princes drooping when they see Lord Ram walking in majestically at the venue. And the fading of the stars is equivalent to decimation of the glory of all the kings and princes who would assemble at the venue.

In this assembly, Lord Ram would be like the sun which sits majestically in the sky and shines alone, eclipsing all other heavenly bodies, including the stars as well as the moon. In other words, small as well as big kings and princes, all would be decimated and trounced in the competition to break the bow. Once they see Lord Ram in their midst, they would be dejected and ashamed of themselves. The Lord's handsome personality and overbearing presence would make all of them lose confidence in themselves and be overwhelmed by an inferiority complex. Their morale would go for a toss, and even if they attempt to break the bow they would do it half-heartedly because the fear of defeat would be constantly nagging at their minds, reducing their abilities and confidence.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 241, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245 that also express the same idea.]

चौ०. नृप सब नखत करहिं उजिआरी । टारि न सकहिं चाप तम भारी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nrpa saba nakhata karahim ujī'ārī. ṭāri na sakahim cāpa tama bhārī.1.

All the assembled kings and princes are twinkling like stars. Their inconsequential light would not be able to remove the darkness symbolised by the heaviness of the bow. (1)

[Note—In this verse, Laxman has compared all the kings and princes who have assembled to break the bow to countless stars twinkling with feeble light in the dark night, and the darkness of the night is compared to the heaviness of the bow. These thousands of stars aren't able to remove even a bit of the darkness of the night. Similarly, even if all the princes and kings would try their hands simultaneously at lifting the bow, they would fail to move it even a fraction of an inch because the bow would prove too heavy for them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245.

Then who or what removes the darkness of the night? The irony is that the moon is also not able to remove the darkness of the night even though it is the brightest body in the night sky. Then what removes this darkness? The obvious answer is—'it is the sun'.

Now, from this we make some interesting deductions. At the bow breaking venue, besides the kings and princes who were like the twinkling stars, there was Sita who is compared to the 'moon' by none other than Lord Ram himself. But we shall find when

we reach the point of the story which describes the actual breaking of the bow that inspite of Sita's presence the 'gloom or depression represented by the darkness caused by the heaviness of the bow remained intact'. That is, her presence at the venue could do nothing to remove the cause of uncertainty of her future by making the bow light. Even as Lord Ram approaches the bow, Sita has prayed fervently to so many gods and goddesses to make the bow light, and had at last took the refuge of the mighty bow itself to plead with it to become light so that Lord Ram can lift and break it. In other words, this 'moon' could not remove the darkness represented by the heaviness of the bow.

Then we shall read that as soon as Lord Ram neared the bow and stood close to it, the bow suddenly became light as a feather. It was easily lifted by him, pulled and broken. This removed the gloom that had cast its dark shadow on Sita and the rest of her family as well as the entire city of Janakpur. So what does it signify? Well, as soon as the 'sun' represented by Lord Ram neared the darkness of the night symbolized by the bow, the darkness vanished and the bow became light as a feather.

What did this 'darkness' imply? It implied gloom and depression because the stubborn heaviness of the bow would prevent anyone from breaking it and it would result in Sita remaining unmarried for life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Doha no. 261.

Now let us examine the effect that Lord Ram's presence had on the bow. We have already read that the Lord is compared to the sun. There are three stages in the relationship between the sun and the night. (i) Everyone knows that even during the night the sun is present in the heavens, but it is present on the other side of the earth. This is the first stage in this relationship—which shows that inspite of its presence near the earth, the sun does not remove the darkness of the night. (ii) The second and third stages are closely related to each other and the latter follows the former quickly. The second stage is when the sun is below the horizon as it approaches to remove the darkness of the night. During this stage only the eastern sky is illuminated while the rest of the sky and the western horizon still remain dark. The night has not gone altogether; it still lingers on. (iii) Then we reach the third and final stage when the sun actually rises up the line of the horizon and makes its presence clear to the night sky. The darkness of the night now leaves the sky immediately, from corner to corner. Before the sun actually rises above the horizon, we can't say that the night has ended.

A similar thing has happened in the case of Lord Ram and the bow losing its heaviness when he came close to it. While the Lord was sitting on his chair amongst other guests in the assembly, it was similar to the first stage when the sun is near the earth but unable to remove its veil of darkness. Remember: The bow was placed on a raised platform specially erected for the purpose of the bow ceremony. Steps led to it. The guests sat at a distance in a circle around this special raised platform. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 240 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8, and Doha no. 244.

When sage Vishwamitra ordered him to go and break the bow and remove the darkness of gloom that had fallen on the assembly like a thick blanket of fog, Lord Ram rose from his seat. This was tantamount to the sun coming near the horizon to prepare to remove the darkness of the night. But the Lord was still below the platform where the bow was kept—like the sun still remaining below the horizon in the early hours of dawn before sunrise. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254.

Then the Lord actually stepped on the platform and came close to the bow. This was like the sun actually stepping up from below the line of the horizon and making its

majestic presence visible in the sky. As soon as this happened—i.e. as soon as Lord Ram stepped up the platform and came close to the bow—it lost its heaviness. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 254; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 261.]

कमल कोक मधुकर खग नाना । हरषे सकल निसा अवसाना ॥ २ ॥
ऐसेहिं प्रभु सब भगत तुहारे । होइहहिं टूटें धनुष सुखारे ॥ ३ ॥

kamala kōka madhukara khaga nānā. haraṣē sakala nisā avasānā. 2.
aisēhiṁ prabhu saba bhagata tumhārē. hō'ihahiṁ ṭūṭēṁ dhanuṣa sukhārē. 3.

Just like the case of the lotus, the Chakravaak (ruddy goose), the honey-bees and the countless birds have become happy that the night has ended (and the sun has risen) [2], Oh Lord, all your devotees and followers would also feel extremely exhilarated and blissful when the bow is broken by you [3]. (2-3)

[Note—All the entities listed here become active as soon as the sun rises. The lotus opens, the Chakravaak couples unite, the bees start buzzing and hovering over flowers in search of nectar, and the birds start chirping and hopping as soon as the day breaks. Here, Laxman has compared them to the devotees and followers of Lord Ram. All of them would be excited and happy.

Now, who are the followers who will be glad and feel rewarded? Well, all the citizens of Janakpur had yearned that Sita be married to Lord Ram. This is abundantly clear in the narration that is described at the following places—(i) when the two brothers had gone to visit Janakpur for the purpose of sight-seeing: refer—Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223; and (ii) during the bow breaking ceremony itself: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240; Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 255; Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precede Doha no. 262; Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 286 (that says that besides the citizens, king Janak and Sita too found extreme happiness when Lord Ram broke the bow); and Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 263 as well as Doha no. 318 (that say that the queen mother and her companions were happy too).

Not only them, but the rest of the world, including the gods in the heaven were also very happy—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 240; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265; (iv) Doha no. 285; (v) Doha no. 324.]

उयउ भानु बिनु श्रम तम नासा । दुरे नखत जग तेजु प्रकासा ॥ ४ ॥
रबि निज उदय व्याज रघुराया । प्रभु प्रतापु सब नृपन्ह दिखाया ॥ ५ ॥

uya'u bhānu binu śrama tama nāsā. durē nakhata jaga tēju prakāsā. 4.
rabi nija udaya byāja raghurāyā. prabhu pratāpu saba nṛpanha dikhāyā. 5.

The sun, as soon as it rises, removes the darkness of the night without making any effort; it is spontaneous and natural. The stars have gone into hiding, and light (of happiness and cheer) has spread throughout the world. (4)

The splendid sun has used its rising as a sign to reveal to all the kings and princes about your brilliant glories and excellent virtues. (5)

[Note—These observations of Laxman have been endorsed later on in the narration when the assembly gathered at the venue of the bow breaking ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245 which says that “when the assembled kings saw Lord Ram in their midst, all of them felt defeated in their hearts just like the stars lose their shine as soon as the sun rises”.

The glory and potentials of Lord Ram have been consistently compared with the sun in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer—(i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

तव भुज बल महिमा उदघाटी । प्रगटी धनु बिघटन परिपाटी ॥ ६ ॥

tava bhuja bala mahimā udaghāṭī. pragaṭī dhanu bigṛhaṭana paripāṭī. 6.

The incident of the bow-breaking ceremony has been designed by the creator as a valley from which the sun representing your valour, strength of arms and glory would rise up to illuminate the rest of the world. In other words, the creator has devised this simple means to highlight and introduce to the world the might of the strength of your arms, your splendid glory and your majestic personality, as well as to establish you as the mightiest warrior on earth.’ (6)

[Note—Everything that happens in this mortal world is determined by the creator. He wished to tell the world about Lord Ram’s arrival to eliminate the formidable demons. So he devised a clever ruse of the bow-breaking ceremony. This would make it possible to bring together under one roof all the great warriors and kings and princes of the world of that time. Even the gods and demons had come there to participate or just to witness the bow ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 251.

If Lord Ram achieves some miraculous success in this assembly then there would be no need to devise other elaborate methods to establish him and his glory on earth.

According to legend, even the king of demons, Ravana of Lanka, had come there. But he did not attempt to approach the bow but had surreptitiously sneaked out and went home.]

बंधु बचन सुनि प्रभु मुसुकाने । होइ सुचि सहज पुनीत नहाने ॥ ७ ॥

नित्यक्रिया करि गुरु पहिं आए । चरन सरोज सुभग सिर नाए ॥ ८ ॥

bandhu bacana suni prabhu musukānē. hō'i suci sahaja punīta nahānē. 7.
nityakriyā kari guru pahim ā'ē. carana sarōja subhaga sira nā'ē. 8.

Lord Ram smiled upon hearing the words of his brother¹. Then he performed his ablution to clean himself though he is always clean and without any (mental, emotional and physical) corruption. (7)

After finishing his daily routine, Lord Ram (and Laxman) came back to their Guru and bowed their graceful heads at the lotus-like feet of their Guru (as a token of showing respect to him). (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram smiled at the clever way in which Laxman had interpreted the things, and how he has subtly encouraged the Lord to cheer up as he is sure to break the bow and marry Sita. What made Laxman so certain that this would really happen? Earlier, sage Vishwamitra had blessed them that their wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237 above. Laxman knew what his brother's wish was, and he used this opportunity to encourage him to cheer up and remain confident.

In the story of the Ramayana we find that like a true friend and companion, Laxman has consistently helped Ram when he is passing through a depressing and uncertain moment. Refer Ram Charit Manas—(i) Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 73 which narrate how Laxman decided to accompany the Lord when he was sent to 14 years of forest exile; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30 which says that at the moment when Lord Ram was crestfallen and extremely dejected when he found that Sita has been abducted, it was Laxman who lent gave him immense moral support and encouraged the Lord not to lose hope and make efforts to find and retrieve her.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is this: Normally Laxman did not interject when his elder brother was speaking. But in this case he immediately began to speak as soon as Lord Ram opened his mouth and said something about the sun. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 238. This was an improper conduct for Laxman. But he had managed not to offend his elder brother by giving such a positive spin to his interjection that though he had cut short his love-struck elder brother's anticipated long-drawn emotional outpourings like the one witnessed on two previous occasions—the first one was in the garden when he had first seen Sita (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 231), and the second one was during the evening prayers when he had seen the rising moon (refer: from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238)—he only caused Lord Ram to feel amused. The Lord realized that Laxman wished to keep him shut, and was so wise and clever that he managed to do without offending the Lord by praising his glories and comparing him to the sun.]

सतानंदु तब जनक बोलाए । कौसिक मुनि पहिं तुरत पठाए ॥ ९ ॥

जनक बिनय तिन्ह आइ सुनाई । हरषे बोलि लिए दोउ भाई ॥ १० ॥

satānandu taba janaka bōlā'ē. kausika muni pahim turata paṭhā'ē. 9.
janaka binaya tinha ā'i sunā'ī. haraṣē bōli li'ē dō'u bhā'ī. 10.

King Janak then (i.e. at approximately the time when Lord Ram had returned to his Guru after completing his morning routine chores) summoned Satanand (Janak's royal priest) and immediately sent him to sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra). (9)

He (Satanand) came to sage Vishwamitra and told him about the request of Janak (i.e. he invited the sage to the bow-breaking ceremony). Vishwamitra became glad and he cheerfully called the two brothers. (10)

[Note— Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 2 also.

Other invited guests, the countless king and princes, had already started arriving at the venue and occupying their seats. All of them were anxious and eager to take a vantage point so that they do not miss the excitement of the rare event even a bit. It was getting late. But the king had to wait before he could allow the ceremony to start because sage Vishwamitra had to arrive at the site first. The sage was a special invitee, and he was the only great sage who was personally invited by the king; the king had shown special respect to him and had gone personally to meet him when the sage, along with Lord Ram and Laxman, had come to Janakpur, and after paying his due respects to him the king had escorted him inside the city and lodged him at a palace close to the royal residence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217.

Other guests had arrived early at the venue and were scrambling for seats, but the sage maintained his dignity and waited patiently for a formal invitation from the king. Remember: The king had posted attendants at the place where the sage and the two brothers were lodged. They were assigned the duty to take care of the sage's needs. They gave the king feedback about who had entered and left the place. This is a normal treatment given to special invitees of a host. So it was only when they informed the king that the two brothers had returned back after their morning prayers and bathing rituals, and the sage had finished his worship formalities that the king summoned his priest Satanand and hurriedly sent him to invite the sage and the two brothers because it was getting late and the crowd was getting restive.

It is to be noted that the two brothers were not present when Satanand met sage Vishwamitra. The brothers always maintained decorum and dignity by not unnecessarily staying too close with the Guru and not disturbing his privacy. Of course they would immediately come as soon as the Guru called them as they stayed close by. They did not want to be an irritating element when the Guru meets someone privately and have some talk with the guest, for it may happen that their presence might not be liked by any one of them, the Guru or the guest, and they did not want to give them a chance to tell them to move out of the place. This had happened earlier also: when king Janak had come to meet sage Vishwamitra outside the city, the two brothers were not present at that moment. They had arrived a little later. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Again we find that still earlier when sage Vishwamitra had arrived in the court of king Dasrath, the father of the brothers, at Ayodhya, all the four brothers had paid their respects and had moved away, leaving the sage and their father to converse in private. That is why the king had 'called the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman' once again to send them with the sage to the latter's hermitage to protect the fire sacrifice. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 207; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 208 respectively.

Sage Vishwamitra was waiting for this moment because he had brought Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur precisely to attend the bow breaking ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210. That is why when Satanand came to invite him, he felt glad and called in the two brothers cheerfully.]

दो०. सतानंद पद बंदि प्रभु बैठे गुर पहि जाइ ।

चलहु तात मुनि कहेउ तब पठवा जनक बोलाइ ॥ २३९ ॥

dōhā.

satānanda pada bandi prabhu baiṭhē gura pahim jā'i.
calahu tāta muni kahē'u taba paṭhavā janaka bōlā'i. 239.

The Lord (Sri Ram) paid his obeisance at the feet of Satanand and then went and sat down near his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). The sage then told him—‘King Janak has sent in his invitation (for us to attend the bow-breaking ceremony). So come dear son, let us go there. (Doha no. 239)

[Note—How could Lord Ram recognise Satanand? The Lord had seen him earlier with Janak when the latter had come to welcome them earlier upon their arrival outside the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Besides this, Satanand was the royal priest of Janakpur, and obviously he had the naturally majestic aura and demeanours of a man who occupies this exalted stature. His priestly cloak and other paraphernalia distinguished him from rest of the Brahmins of the place.

Not only this, since he was seated close to sage Vishwamitra and the latter had welcomed him and was talking with him proved beyond doubt that the guest was an honoured personality. Therefore he must be shown respect. And so the Lord and his younger brother bowed before Satanand to pay their respects to him.

It will be noticed upon close examination that on the earlier occasion when Lord Ram had seen Satanand in the company of Janak when the latter had arrived to welcome sage Vishwamitra, the Lord and his brother had not bowed before him, but went straight to their Guru, sage Vishwamitra, and sat down near him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 214. But here they came in and first bowed before Satanand and then sat down near their Guru. The reason is that earlier they had not known the head priest as he was accompanying others who came with king Janak. But now in the present instance he was acquainted with him, and therefore it was obligatory to pay respects.]

चौ०. सीय स्वयंबरु देखिअ जाई । ईसु काहि धौं देइ बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
लखन कहा जस भाजनु सोई । नाथ कृपा तव जापर होई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

sīya svayambaru dēkhi'a jā'ī. īsu kāhi dhaurm dē'i barā'ī. 1.
lakhana kahā jasa bhājanu sō'ī. nātha kṛpā tava jāpara hō'ī. 2.

Let us go and see the marriage ceremony of Sita. Let us see whom Isha (literally the ‘Lord’; but traditionally the word is used to mean Lord Shiva as Shiva is the “Lord of the world”, and he is also called ‘Mahadeva’, the ‘Great God’) bestows the privilege of victory and fame (by breaking the bow and accepting the hands of Sita in marriage).¹ (1)

Laxman said, ‘Oh Lord! The person upon whom you (sage Vishwamitra) are pleased would get this privilege and fame of breaking the bow.’ (2)

[Note—After all, this was the very reason why sage Vishwamitra had come to Janakpur. He had told the two brothers after they had protected his fire sacrifice that he wished to take them along to witness the bow-breaking event that Janak was organizing. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.

Now, it was Lord Shiva's bow, and it could be broken only if Shiva wants. So sage Vishwamitra made this observation. Earlier when Lord Ram and Laxman had narrated to the sage the events of the garden and about the Lord developing a soft corner in his heart for Sita, the sage had blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled. Now, Laxman is hinting to this blessing. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 237.

Remember: Laxman had himself prophesied the victory of Lord Ram in the bow-breaking competition relying on the blessings of the sage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239. Hence, Laxman is merely reiterating what is destined to happen. Further, he is subtly reminding the Guru about his blessings, and stresses that if he wants than Lord Ram would be victorious.

Laxman was aware of the fact that Vishwamitra was no ordinary sage. He was known to be a 'Trikaalagya', one who knows the events of the three phases of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. So, if the sage had blessed them their wishes would be fulfilled upon learning about their experiences in the garden, then it is sure that Lord Ram would marry Sita. And this can happen only if the Lord breaks the bow.

Sage Vishwamitra's deity was also Lord Shiva, and the sage had prayed to the Lord before blessing the two brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 237. How do we know that Shiva was the deity whom the sage worshipped? Well, all great sages, seers and hermits adore and worship Lord Shiva as their favourite God because Shiva is known as 'Maha-deva', the Great God. Besides this fact, a person always invokes his favoured god or goddess when he faces an uncertain future. Sage Vishwamitra has explicitly invoked Lord Shiva in line no. 1 by saying "Isha", which is one of the many famous names of Lord Shiva. This proves that the deity whom he worshipped was none else but Shiva.]

हरषे मुनि सब सुनि बर बानी । दीन्हि असीस सबहिं सुखु मानी ॥ ३ ॥

haraṣē muni saba suni bara bānī. dīnhi asīsa sabahim sukhu mānī. 3.

The entire company of sages (who had accompanied Vishwamitra as well as Satanand) felt very delighted when they heard the prudent, clever and wise words of Laxman, and all of them collectively blessed him (that his words would come true) (3)

[Note—Both sage Vishwamitra and priest Satanand occupied a high stature in society. Even today we observe that when some great or renowned seer moves around he is always accompanied by a large number of junior seers. So, Vishwamitra and Satanand were not alone; there must have been many more sages and Brahmins present on the occasion. When they heard what Laxman has said, that "anyone upon whom sage Vishwamitra is pleased would be able to break the bow and marry Sita", thereby showing the greatest of respect to his Guru sage Vishwamitra, it was natural for them to feel happy and bless Laxman.

We must note how clever Laxman was. Till this moment, the only sage who had blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled was sage Vishwamitra. Now all of them have blessed Laxman. What was Laxman's wish? Obviously it was that his

beloved elder brother should break the bow and fulfill his wish of marrying Sita. This is abundantly clear by reading Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239 above. Later on we shall read that in the assembly when none of the kings and princes could move the bow and king Janak had expressed his annoyance and dejection, going to the extent of saying that the earth is devoid of strong warriors inspite of being aware that Lord Ram was present in the assembly and had yet not been given a chance to lift the bow, Laxman becomes extremely angry and had sternly rebuked king Janak against the rules of etiquette and without any fear of consequences. At that time Laxman would warn the king that he (Laxman) can turn the earth upside down if Lord Ram permits; how dare Janak could make such a disparaging remark in the presence of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.

Then we find a little later that as soon as Lord Ram was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to go and break the bow, Laxman has warned all the legendary supporters of the world, such as Seshnath, the serpent who supports the earth on its hood, the tortoise named Kamath who supports the earth from sinking into the nether world by keeping it lifted on its back, and the Digpals, the custodians of the directions, to get ready as the Lord was about to break the bow and it would create an unprecedented shock that may turn the whole world upside down. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.

So we find that Laxman has played the perfect role of a true friend, a faithful companion and a loving brother who is totally committed to the happiness of his elder sibling.

Here it is said that when the sages and Brahmins heard the “prudent, clever and wise words of Laxman” they collectively blessed him. What was so nice about what Laxman has said? Well, Laxman has praised his Guru sage Vishwamitra, and this is regarded as an excellent character; one should always give his Guru more respect than even the gods. This pleased the sages and they blessed Laxman.]

पुनि मुनिबृन्द समेत कृपाला । देखन चले धनुषमख साला ॥ ४ ॥

puni munibṛnda samēta kṛpālā. dēkhana calē dhanuṣamakha sālā. 4.

After that, the merciful Lord (Ram) accompanied all the sages and went to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony to see it (and witness the event). (4)

[Note—The verse does not say that Lord Ram has gone to ‘see the bow’, but that he went to ‘see the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony’, the “Dhanush-makha Sala”. [‘Dhanush’ = bow; ‘Makha’ = a great ceremony on the lines of fire sacrifices; and ‘Sala’ = the venue, the arena.]

Now, what does this mean? It means that the Lord was not charmed by the bow at all as he knew that it was old, rusty and unattractive. On the other hand, the venue was colourfully decorated and a huge number of kings and princes from all corners of the earth had assembled there. It would be an exceptionally fascinating sight to behold, with kings, princes and their attendants sporting unique attires, exhibiting demeanours, languages and faces from various corners of the earth, and accompanying this would be the wonderful spray of myriad colours and cacophony of sounds representing diverse cultures and societies in this world. Like any other young boy of his age, Lord Ram was eager to enjoy this rare opportunity.]

रंगभूमि आए दोउ भाई । असि सुधि सब पुरबासिन्ह पाई ॥ ५ ॥
चले सकल गृह काज बिसारी । बाल जुबान जरठ नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

raṅgabdhūmi ā'ē dō'u bhā'ī. asi sudhi saba purabāsinha pā'ī. 5.
calē sakala gṛha kāja bisārī. bāla jubāna jaraṭha nara nārī. 6.

When the citizens of Janakpur heard that the two brothers have come to the arena of the bow ceremony [5], all of them—the children, the adults and the old, the men and the women—abandoned whatever work they were engaged in and rushed to the venue. (6)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 7; verse nos. 1/73—1/80; and verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 2.

Earlier we have already read how the entire city had poured out into the streets of Janakpur when the two brothers had gone to see the sights. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 225.

Now, the same thing is repeated. Note that the citizens have shown no interest to leave their jobs and attend the ceremony till the time they heard that Lord Ram and Laxman have come. They weren't interested in seeing the countless kings and princes; they remained engaged in their routine affairs of life. But as soon as the news spread that the two brothers have arrived at the venue, there was a sudden rush of people to see them so much so that king Janak had to send more volunteers to control the surging crowd and get them seated in an orderly manner. This would be clear in the next line below.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Geetawali", verse no. 68, stanza no. 7 that says exactly the same thing that as soon as the citizens heard that the Lord has come to the venue of the bow ceremony, all of them abandoned whatever they were doing and rushed to the arena.]

देखी जनक भीर भै भारी । सुचि सेवक सब लिए हँकारी ॥ ७ ॥
तुरत सकल लोगन्ह पहिं जाहू । आसन उचित देहु सब काहू ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhī janaka bhīra bhai bhārī. suci sēvaka saba li'ē hamkārī. 7.
turata sakala lōganha pahim jāhū. āsana ucita dēhu saba kāhū. 8.

When king Janak found that there was a sudden huge crowd, he called in clever and competent attendants and volunteers (who could manage the crowd wisely) [7] and ordered them—'Go immediately to the people and give all of them proper seats. [8]' (7-8)

[Note—This endorses the deduction made above that as soon as Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the arena, virtually the entire city poured in. There was a sudden burst of commotion as everyone jostled with each other to find a vantage seat. To control the surging crowd, the king summoned extra hands.

The king had not expected such a huge crowd because in that case he would have planned for it in advance and would have stationed sufficient guards to control the people. This surge was sudden like a flash flood.]

दो०. कहि मृदु बचन बिनीत तिन्ह बैठारे नर नारि ।
उत्तम मध्यम नीच लघु निज निज थल अनुहारि ॥ २४० ॥

dōhā.

kahi mṛdu bacana binīta tinha baiṭhārē nara nāri.
unāma madhyama nīca laghu nija nija thala anuhāri. 240.

These attendants and volunteers spoke sweetly, and they politely directed the arriving men and women to take their respective seats keeping into consideration their age and stature in the social hierarchy. (Doha no. 240)

[Note—Usually, the king's guards are rude to the common man; they push and shove. But king Janak had called in decent guards who knew good manners. They politely guided the people to separate enclosures—such as the ones for old, the young, the women, the single men, families, couples, and so on. Then they also took into consideration their social background and financial standing; after all, all were not equal. Then they had to take into view whether the arriving men and women were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Sudras, the four distinct sections of tradition-bound society.]

चौ०. राजकुअँर तेहि अवसर आए । मनहुँ मनोहरता तन छाए ॥ १ ॥
गुन सागर नागर बर बीरा । सुंदर स्यामल गौर सरीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rājaku'amra tēhi avasara ā'ē. manahum' manōharatā tana chā'ē. 1.
guna sāgara nāgara bara bīrā. sundara syāmala gaura sarīrā. 2.

Just at that moment (when the king's guards were guiding the citizens to their seats) the two princes (Lord Ram and Laxman) arrived at the venue. They were so adorable to look at as if beauty and magnificence had spread themselves like a paste on their handsome bodies. (1)

They were an ocean of virtues, were good mannered and cultured, were wonderful warriors, were handsome to look at, and were of a dark and a fair complexion respectively. (2)

[Note—The dark complexioned prince was Lord Ram, and the fair complexioned one was Laxman.

It ought to be noted here that both of them have same good virtues, are equally wonderful to look at, and are equally handsome, strong and good mannered. This verse is very important in the sense that it, once and for all, removes the doubt in the mind of the reader of this epic story that Lord Ram was more handsome, virtuous, mannered and strong than the rest of the brothers. It is not so, but since Lord Ram is the hero of the story, the narrator, Goswami Tulsidas, has positioned him prominently and has always concentrated on highlighting the Lord's glories and virtues. But this does not mean that

his other brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, lacked in any of these virtues. Being the eldest brother and the hero of the story it is apt to give Lord Ram a special treatment.]

राज समाज बिराजत रूरे । उडगन महुँ जनु जुग बिधु पूरे ॥ ३ ॥
जिन्ह कें रही भावना जैसी । प्रभु मूरति तिन्ह देखी तैसी ॥ ४ ॥

rāja samāja birājata rūrē. uḍagana mahum̐ janu juga bidhu pūrē. 3.
jinha kēm̐ rahī bhāvanā jaisī. prabhu mūrati tinha dēkhī taisī. 4.

They looked outstanding in the galaxy of kings and princes as if two moons were shining brilliantly in the midst of a huge collection of inconsequential twinkling stars in the night sky. (3)

Everyone in the assembly gazed at the Lord and saw his form according to the conception he or she had of him. (4)

[Note—Once again, both the brothers are compared to the moon, removing all distinctions between them. The only way to distinguish between Lord Ram and Laxman was the colour of their complexion—Lord Ram had a dark complexion and Laxman was fair.

Chaupai line no. 4 has a great spiritual message—it essentially says that all living beings have the right to view and approach the Lord in the way they like, and the Lord welcomes all of them by reciprocating their emotions and giving them rewards or blessings which are in consonance with each individual's conception and view of the Lord.

There were hundreds of people in the assembly, and each saw the Lord differently. For those who were friendly inclined saw a friend in him; those who were jealous saw an invincible competitor; those who were inimical to his presence saw a powerful enemy that instills fear in his opponents. The men and the women saw him as the beloved groom of Sita, their beloved guest and someone most dear to their hearts, the children saw him as their fast friend, and Sita saw in him her refuge and succour, her true love and partner in life.

Devotees saw their revered Lord in the form of Ram, and non-devotees saw a handsome prince who would be the future husband of princess Sita.

It must be remembered at this point that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being like the rest of the people. He was an incarnate Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who had to come down to earth in a human form to eliminate the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka. There were other reasons also for Lord Vishnu to become a human being. These are enumerated and narrated in the earlier part of Baal Kand. Hence it was no wonder that the same unchanging form of the Lord could assume various forms to give the visual effect of so many different persons standing there.]

देखहिं रूप महा रनधीरा । मनहुँ बीर रसु धरें सरीरा ॥ ५ ॥
डरे कुटिल नृप प्रभुहि निहारी । मनहुँ भयानक मूरति भारी ॥ ६ ॥
रहे असुर छल छोनिष बेषा । तिन्ह प्रभु प्रगट कालसम देखा ॥ ७ ॥
पुरबासिन्ह देखे दोउ भाई । नरभूषन लोचन सुखदाई ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhahim rūpa mahā ranadhīrā. manahum̐ bīra rasu dharēm sarīrā. 5.
 ḍarē kuṭila nṛpa prabhuhi nihārī. manahum̐ bhayānaka mūrati bhārī. 6.
 rahē asura chala chōnipa bēṣā. tinha prabhu pragaṭa kālasama dēkhā. 7.
 purabāsinha dēkhē dō'u bhā'ī. narabhūṣana lōcana sukhadā'ī. 8.

[These four lines describe how different people viewed the same form of Lord Ram differently.]

Those who were valiant, strong, fearless and brave warriors saw that the virtues of bravery, courage, strength, fearlessness, resilience and valiance, which are characteristics of warriors, have assumed a physical form and standing before them (in the form of Lord Ram). (5)

Those kings who were wicked and pervert were scared out of their wits, feeling terrified when they saw the horrifying image of the Lord as if terror and horror have personified themselves (to attack and kill them). (6)

Demons ('Asurs') were also present in the assembly in the disguise of kings. They saw the Lord as a living monster who was none other than 'Kaal', the Death God, personified himself. (7)

And the citizens of Janakpur saw the two brothers as jewels of the human race, as the princes whose mere sight gives comfort and happiness to the eyes (of the beholder). (8)

[Note—So we see how the same image or form of Lord Ram and Laxman were perceived and interpreted differently by different people depending upon their attitude, thoughts, outlook and conception.

Though it is not mentioned here, even the gods had come in the form of human kings and princes—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251.]

दो०. नारि बिलोकहिं हरषि हियँ निज निज रुचि अनुरूप ।
 जनु सोहत सिंगार धरि मूरति परम अनूप ॥ २४१ ॥

dōhā.

nāri bilōkahim haraṣi hiyaṁ̐ nija nija ruci anurūpa.
 janu sōhata siṅgāra dhari mūrati parama anūpa. 241.

Meanwhile, the ladies of the city saw the image of Lord Ram in accordance with the conception they had of the Lord in their hearts. For some the Lord was a most attractive and fabulous personified form of cupid who has enamoured, captivated and enthralled their hearts. (Doha no. 241)

[Note—The young damsels of the city fell in love by the handsome form of the Lord. This is a natural phenomenon with young girls of impressionable age. In their hearts they all began to harbour love for Lord Ram. It is believed that the Lord fulfilled the wishes of all of them in his next incarnation as Lord Krishna during whose time these ladies had taken birth as the countless Gopis (milk maids) with whom Krishna played around during his childhood days.]

चौ०. बिदुषन्ह प्रभु बिराटमय दीसा । बहु मुख कर पग लोचन सीसा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

biduṣanha prabhu birāṭamaya dīsā. bahu mukha kara paga lōcana sīsā. 1.

Those who were learned, enlightened and well-versed in the philosophy of metaphysics as envisioned in the scriptures saw the Lord in his ‘Viraat’ form that had many mouths, hands, legs, eyes and heads. (1)

[Note—The word “Viraat” means vast, colossus, infinite and all-encompassing. This form refers to the cosmic manifestation of the Supreme Lord known as Brahm. It encompasses the entire creation; nothing escapes it. It is all-pervading and endless. Since this creation has countless varieties of creatures, from the single-celled to the most complex, and each unit is a form of this Viraat, it follows that Viraat has as many mouths, hands, legs, eyes and heads as there are number and varieties of creatures in this creation. This form of the Lord has no beginning, middle or end; it is infinite and eternal.

The form of the Viraat Purush has been described in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 14-16 as the form which has “thousands of heads, eyes and legs. Since the Lord is all-pervading and immanent, his hands, legs, eyes, head, mouth and ears are present everywhere. He surrounds everything in the universe from all sides, and is established within each unit of it.” This Upanishad belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition and is its 5th Upanishad.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 9-10 clearly affirm that it is the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-pervading gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm, that resides in the body of all living beings as their Atma. To quote—

“Verse no. 9 = It is this Viraat Purush that lives in all the living beings as their Atma that resides in their inner self (9).

“Verse no. 10 = A wise and enlightened aspirant who knows that this Brahm is established in the subtle heart of all living beings (as their Atma, their pure conscious self) is able to dismantle all the knots of ignorance in this world. [That is, he attains supreme knowledge of the Truth that is absolute and like nectar.] (10).”

In fact, the entire Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1 of the *Mundak Upanishad* is devoted to the theme of Viraat Purush, and it says that the entire creation has been created as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 2, clearly states the supreme Lord resides in this creation as its Atma and Pran. To quote—
“We bow and pay our respects to the supreme Lord (Brahm referred to as Lord Ram here because this particular Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Ram) who lives in this world and uniformly pervades in it as its ‘Atma’ and its ‘Pran’—i.e. as the creation’s soul and life, as its essence, its fundamental basis and its core.”

Now let us quote the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition that precisely describes the Viraat Purush as follows:—

“Canto 2, paragraph no. 11 = The Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being, has countless heads, eyes, hands and legs. [This is a symbolic way to highlight the fact that the Viraat is the sum-total of all the gross bodies that live in this creation. The Viraat Purush is a metaphor for the all-inclusive form and all-encompassing nature of the supreme Brahm, as the former represents all living organisms in this creation. According to the theory of Genesis of

Creation as outlined in the Upanishads, it is from the Viraat Purush that the whole creation has been moulded; the creation is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush. Since the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm as outlined in the forgoing paragraphs, it follows that the creation moulded out of this Viraat is also a manifestation of the Brahm. Therefore, this creation represents the gross body of Brahm. It is this Viraat Purush who created the creature in his own image. Since there are uncountable forms and varieties of creatures or living beings in this creation, from the single cell organisms to the most complex human, and each individual is an image of the Viraat, it is easy to understand the meaning and import of the statement that the Viraat has thousands of hands, mouths etc. as stated above. Besides this point, another interpretation is that Brahm in the form of the Viraat lives in all the places of this creation at the same time. This is in consonance with the eclectic virtue of Brahm as being omnipresent all-encompassing and all-pervading.]

The Viraat Purush, having countless ears*, surrounds the entire creation from all sides and uniformly pervades in it. He is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. [*The phrase ‘having countless ears’ simply means that Brahm, in the form of the Viraat Purush, assumed as many forms as there were creatures who could hear. It also means that Brahm, as the living being’s consciousness, heard or became aware of everything that was happening in this creation. It is a metaphoric way of saying that a wise man who knows the truth of Brahm is also one who is well aware of everything in this creation; nothing is hidden from his knowledge; he is wise, erudite, knowledgeable, enlightened, omniscient and all-knowing. He receives all information and knowledge, but then picks and chooses what is auspicious and righteous. He is not ‘deaf’ to the teaching of the scriptures. It ought to be noted here that the creature, the living being, especially the human being, is said to be replica of the Viraat Purush. Refer Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Canto 1, Section 2, verse no. 3.]

He (the Viraat Purush) is both Saguna and Nirguna. [That is, the Lord has revealed himself in numerous forms, thereby becoming ‘Saguna’—or the one with discernible characteristics, definable attributes and specific qualities. At the same time, the Lord has no visible form as his primary nature is formless and without attributes—i.e. he is ‘Nirguna’. This concept has been elaborately described earlier in paragraphs 2-8 of this present Canto 2.]

He (the Viraat Purush) is a personification of the grand virtues of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment), Bal (strength, valour, vitality and potent), Aishwarya (fame, majesty, grandeur, magnificence, glory), Shakti (power, dynamism, energy, punch and vitality), and Tej (splendour, radiance, glory, energy, magnificence, dynamism, agility and speed).

He (the Viraat Purush) is established in the form of innumerable worlds of diverse varieties and forms.

It is he (the Viraat Purush) who is the supreme Lord of creation known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or soul of creation. He is an embodiment of eternal and unbound bliss, as well as is endowed with all the noble and auspicious virtues and glories that exist in this creation.

He (the Viraat Purush) is absolutely independent (because he is supreme and not subservient to anything). He is all-knowing and omniscient. He is almighty and all-powerful. He is the ultimate controller of everything in existence. And he is an image of all the most auspicious virtues that ensure all-round well being in this creation.

He (the Viraat Purush) is established in the form of a majestic fount of immense ‘Tej’ (splendour, radiance, glory, energy, magnificence, dynamism etc.) that cannot be described, is endless, and is most divine.

This Supreme Being having the above grand and magnificent virtues pervades throughout the cosmic Anda created from the Avyakta due to Avidya (as narrated in

paragraph no. 9). This Anda or the cosmic egg is the basis of Maha-Maya that has surrounded the Supreme Being (i.e. it is the basis of creation of the great delusion because it is in this form of the cosmic egg that the Supreme Being had allowed himself to assume a form which is not in consonance with his primary nature of being formless). [As is clear by now, the Supreme Being that is referred to here is the cosmic Consciousness that infuses life in the cosmic egg. The egg has been literally 'fertilised' by Brahm, the Supreme Being, who has passed on to it his 'genes' in the form of 'consciousness' possessing all the virtues enumerated herein above. Therefore, these virtues of Brahm would naturally be passed on to the 'embryo' that developed in this egg, and the subsequent 'creation' that would emerge from this cosmic egg upon its maturity. It follows that this is the evident proof why Brahma known as Hiranyagarbha representing the 'embryo', and Vishnu known as the Viraat Purush representing the 'creation' would be an image or a 'gene-bearer' of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Now, once the 'formless' (or Nirguna and Avyakta) Brahm assumes the 'formed' shape of an egg (becomes Saguna and Vyakta) he is bound to be affected by the characteristics of something that has a 'form', something that is 'Saguna' (one that has various Gunas or qualities) and 'Vyakta' (expressed, revealed). In other words, the Brahm which was without any Maya (delusions) prior to the entire process of creation rolling out has now become surrounded by it, or tainted and affected by it.]

Therefore, the 'Maha-Maya' is the gross body created out of delusions of the almighty Lord God known as Brahm who is naturally and inherently almighty, all-powerful, universal, uniform, non-dual, and an embodiment of un-bound bliss and beatitude.

It is in each pore of the macrocosmic form of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush that numerous universes or worlds and their gross things are born or created. Each one of them is a revelation of the same Lord Narayan; they are images of the same Brahm. [It is because, as has been explained above, they carry the genes of their parent known as Brahm. In this context, refer to Canto 3, paragraph nos. 11-12 which will make it clear that the 'Viraat Purush' meant here is not the one which is regarded as being synonymous with Vishnu, but is the 'Adi-Viraat Purush' that precedes Vishnu and from whom even Vishnu, the commonly known form of Viraat, was created. This creation has been visualised as being in different layers like many concentric circles, one higher than its previous one. This concept will be discussed in Canto 6.] (11)."

Tulsidas himself has described the concept of the "Viraat Purush" on many occasions in this epic 'Ram Charit Manas' at the following places:--

(i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55 where Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, has seen the Virrat form of Lord Ram; (ii) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 202 where Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, has seen the Virrat form of the Lord; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 242 where the wise kings allude to this Viraat form of the Lord while advising pervert kings to desist from attempting to break the bow and marrying Sita as it would be a futile exercise; (iv) Lanka Kand, from Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 where Mandadori, the wife of Ravana, the demon king, has tried to persuade her belligerent husband not to fight Lord Ram as he is not an ordinary human being but the Virrat form himself in the form of Lord Ram; and (v) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 81 where Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, has seen the Virrat form of Lord Ram.]

जनक जाति अवलोकहिं कैसें । सजन सगे प्रिय लागहिं जैसें ॥ २ ॥

सहित बिदेह बिलोकहिं रानी । सिसु सम प्रीति न जाति बखानी ॥ ३ ॥

janaka jāti avalōkahim̐ kaisēm̐. sajana sagē priya lāgahim̐ jaisēm̐. 2.
sahita bidēha bilōkahim̐ rānī. sisu sama prīti na jāti bakhānī. 3.

The relatives, the kith and kin of king Janak look at Lord Ram and loved him as if he was a dear member of the family. (2)

Similarly, Videha (king Janak) and his wife, the queen, watched the Lord as if the latter was their young son. With this conception, the intensity of love and affection that developed in them cannot be described in words. (3)

[Note—These two lines describe how the king, the queen and the rest of the royal family looked at Lord Ram and Laxman, the emotions and sentiments that developed in their minds and hearts.

King Janak had a large family. His father Hriswaraam had three queens. Their names were Shubhaa, Sadaa and Sarwadaa. Shubhaa had two sons—Shirdhwaj and Kushdhwaj; Sadaa had four sons—Shatrujeet, Yash-shaali, Arimardan and Ripu-taapan; and Sarwadaa had four sons—Mahi-mangal, Balaakar, Tejastha and Mahaa-virya. {Total 10 sons.}

The eldest queen's sons, i.e. Shirdhwaj and Kushdhwaj, had two daughters each. They were Sita and Urmila who were the daughters of the king, Shirdhwaj, and Maandavi and Srutikirti were the daughters of his younger brother Kushdhwaj. Sita was married to Lord Ram, Urmila to Laxman, Maandavi to Bharat, and Srutikirti to Shatrughan.

Shirdhwaj's other step brothers had one daughter each. All of them accompanied Sita to Ayodhya, her in-law's place, as her companions.

Hence, the entire family of king Janak perceived Lord Ram and Laxman as a close member of their family.

It is essential to note here that the word “Janak” or “Videha” is a title or surname assigned to the kings of the kingdom of Nimi dynasty, and not the name of an individual.]

जोगिन्ह परम तत्त्वमय भासा । सांत सुद्ध सम सहज प्रकासा ॥ ४ ॥

jōginha parama tattvamaya bhāsā. sānta sud'dha sama sahaja prakāsā. 4.

Ascetics perceived the Lord as a personified form of the supreme Tattwa (the fundamental Truth and Reality of existence; the Supreme Consciousness). They found the form of the Lord as being an image of peace, tranquility and serenity, an image that was pure and uncorrupt, an image that represented equality and equanimity, an image that was simple, unpretentious and divine, and an image that was self-illuminated, splendid and radiant. (4)

[Note—Since ascetics focus on doing meditation and realizing the truth of the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ that is an image of the supreme Self or cosmic Consciousness that is at the foundation of the entire living world, which is therefore the only and absolute Truth and Reality in this creation, when they watched Lord Ram they could see this essential Truth standing before them in a personified form. In other words, just like the learned and enlightened persons could observe the Viraat Purush in the form of Lord Ram, ascetics could see the supreme Self or the cosmic Consciousness in a personified form in the person of Lord Ram.]

हरिभगतन्ह देखे दोउ भ्राता । इष्टदेव इव सब सुख दाता ॥ ५ ॥

haribhagatanha dēkhē dō'u bhrātā. iṣṭadēva iva saba sukha dātā. 5.

Those who were devotees of Hari (Lord Vishnu) could see the two brothers as a personified form of their revered deity, i.e. Lord Hari, who bestows all imaginable bliss, joy and happiness to his devotees. (5)

[Note—In other words, when the devotees of Lord Vishnu watched Lord Ram and Laxman they found that Lord Vishnu is standing personally before them. This sight granted them immense happiness, joy and spiritual bliss.

This is obviously true because Lord Ram was indeed an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.]

रामहि चितव भायँ जेहि सीया । सो सनेहु सुखु नहिं कथनीया ॥ ६ ॥

उर अनुभवति न कहि सक सोऊ । कवन प्रकार कहै कबि कोऊ ॥ ७ ॥

rāmahi citava bhāyam' jēhi sīyā. sō sanēhu sukhu nahim kathanīyā. 6.
ura anubhavati na kahi saka sō'ū. kavana prakāra kahai kabi kō'ū. 7.

The way Sita perceived Lord Ram, and the intensity of bliss and joy that she derived from this was so mysterious, immense and intense that they cannot be described. (6)

She could feel this emotion heaving inside her heart, she could experience the bliss, the happiness, the ecstasy and the thrill that it created within her bosom, but even she could not express it in words (or would be unable to do it even if she had wanted). Then say, how can another person, such as a poet, ever be able to narrate or describe it? (7)

[Note—It ought to be noted that none of the observers had expressed their emotions and sentiments vocally. All of them just sat and enjoyed the sight in accordance to the conception they had in their hearts and minds about Lord Ram and Laxman. All of them felt exceedingly delighted and exhilarated.

However, those who were jealous and inimical to the presence of the two brothers were terrified out of their wits at their sight (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 241). Their faces lost radiance, they all felt despaired, and their heads drooped in dejection.

The greatest happiness was that of Sita's; it is obvious. When she left the garden after enshrining Lord Ram in her temple-like heart and closing its doors shut to keep the Lord's image permanently established close to her bosom (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234), she had no way to be sure that she will ever see her beloved Lord again in life. Well, she could not be sure for certain that sage Vishwamitra would bring them to the arena. It could be that the sage would come when her father invited him, but there were chances that he could order the two brothers to stay back at the place where they were lodged, or send them on some errand, or the brothers themselves would want to see more of the city of Janakpur and would go out wandering around while the 'bow rituals' were underway as they might have no interest in this mega-circus!

Therefore, when Sita saw the two brothers once again it is natural that she would feel delighted. The chances of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying her brightened when she saw the great sage Vishwamitra, whose mere presence was awe-inspiring and majestic, sitting in the middle of the two brothers on a special seat meant for them. Then she guessed that like the other invited kings and princes who would try to lift the bow, Lord Ram would also be given a chance. With the mighty sage Vishwamitra personally present to bless Lord Ram, the chances of the Lord winning over others were extremely bright. This thought cheered Sita's heart no end.]

एहि बिधि रहा जाहि जस भाऊ । तेहिं तस देखेउ कोसलराऊ ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi rahā jāhi jasa bhā'ū. tēhim tasa dēkhē'u kōsalarā'ū. 8.

On this wise, every individual saw the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram) in different ways in accordance to his likings, preferences, conceptions, sentiments and emotions. (8)

[Note—The realm of the kingdom of Ayodhya was also known as “Kaushal”. This verse sums up the subject introduced in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241.]

दो०. राजत राज समाज महुँ कोसलराज किसोर ।
सुंदर स्यामल गौर तन बिस्व बिलोचन चोर ॥ २४२ ॥

dōhā.

rājata rāja samāja mahum' kōsalarāja kisōra.
sundara syāmala gaura tana bisva bilōcana cōra. 242.

Thus were present the two wonderful princes of the king of Kaushal ('kōsalarāja kisōra'; king Dasrath's sons Lord Ram and Laxman) in the middle of the grand assembly of kings and princes.

They were beautiful to behold—being handsome, having a dark and fair complexion respectively, and being so attractive that they stole the attention of the world in the sense that when anyone saw them his eyes become riveted to their magnificent forms. (Doha no. 242)

[Note—This idea is expressed elsewhere also. For instance: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 241 says “the two brothers had beautiful dark and fair complexioned body”; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 says “the people felt very blissful and happy upon seeing them so much so that gazed at them fixedly, and their eyes refused to move away even if they wanted to”; and (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 215 says “the dark and fair complexioned princes were of a tender age and sweet to look at; they provided comfort to the eyes (or their sight soothed the eyes) and were so attractive that they virtually stole the attention of the world which had its eyes fixed on them”.]

चौ०. सहज मनोहर मूरति दोऊ । कोटि काम उपमा लघु सोऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sahaja manōhara mūrati dō'ū. kōṭi kāma upamā laghu sō'ū. 1.

The two enchanting images (of Lord Ram and Laxman) were inherently, intrinsically and naturally beautiful, charming and magnificent (without any artificiality or pretentiousness with them). Even numerous Kamdeos (cupids) would fade in attractiveness and glamour when compared to them. (1)

[Note—It is a constant refrain in classical literature to compare somebody exceptionally beautiful and attractive to 'Kamdeo (cupid)' as he is the patron god of beauty, attraction, love and passion. He is supposed to be the most handsome, charming and attractive god in physical terms.

Another such metaphor universally used for beauty and charm is the 'moon'. The 'sun' is used for radiance and splendour, the 'lotus' for purity, and the 'swan' for wisdom as well as purity. More such metaphors and similes are cited in the verses that follow below.

So, essentially this verse means that the charm, beauty and attractiveness of the two brothers were incomparable in the entire creation.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10, the same idea is expressed when it says "the creator had mixed together the virtues of beauty, good manners and affection, and out of this mixture he had created or crafted the fabulous image of Lord Ram and Laxman; many millions of Kamdeos and Moons have been offered to their images so that the essential qualities of the former are transferred to the latter".]

सरद चंद निंदक मुख नीके । नीरज नयन भावते जी के ॥ २ ॥

sarada canda nindaka mukha nīkē. nīraja nayana bhāvatē jī kē. 2.

The beauty and charm of their faces put to shame the glory of the full moon during the winter night (when the moon is supposed to look most glamorous and wonderful). Their lotus-like eyes were pleasing for the heart. (2)

चितवनि चारु मार मनु हरनी । भावति हृदय जाति नहिं बरनी ॥ ३ ॥

citavani cāru mārā manu haranī. bhāvati hdaya jāti nahim baranī. 3.

Their glances were so bewitching and captivating that they enthralled the Mana (mind and heart) of even Kamdeo (cupid) (so what to talk of ordinary humans). Their glances and their general charm pleased one's heart, but it is not possible to describe how and how much. (3)

[Note—Since Kamdeo (cupid) is the most handsome god in creation, he finds no attractiveness in any other god or human; he treats all living beings as being inferior to him as far as the virtues of beauty, charm, attractiveness, glamour and other physical attributes are concerned. But when he sees the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, he is transfixed by wonder at their magnificence and charm.

This means that the sight of the two brothers is so compelling that even the patron god of beauty and charm is dumbfounded and enchanted by it. If this is the condition of Kamdeo, one can easily understand that ordinary mortals would be simply mesmerized by this sight that was beyond the purview of being described in words, and was so magnificent that words such as ‘beauty, loveliness, prettiness’ etc. do not do justice to its excellence and fineness and majesty. When the eyes of the two brothers and Kamdeo meet, the latter is mesmerised into a trance; he can’t move his eyes away from Lord Ram and Laxman because in all sooth he hasn’t, in all his living days, seen such a fabulous and enchanting sight of exceeding magnificence and beauty in this creation, and he marvels at it, being wonderstruck!]

कल कपोल श्रुति कुंडल लोला । चिबुक अधर सुंदर मृदु बोला ॥ ४ ॥

kala kapōla śruti kuṇḍala lōlā. cibuka adhara sundara mṛdu bōlā. 4.

Their cheeks were beautiful too. The ear-rings or pendants that adorned their ears swung majestically (when they move their heads). Their chins were charming, their lips were glamorous, and their voices were very sweet (i.e. when they chatted, they spoke pleasantly and sweetly). (4)

कुमुदबंधु कर निंदक हाँसा । भृकुटी बिकट मनोहर नासा ॥ ५ ॥

kumudabandhu kara nindaka hāṁsā. bhr̥kuṭī bikaṭa manōhara nāsā. 5.

Their laughter and smile were so attractive that it put to shame and ridiculed the light of the moon (known as ‘Kumud-Bandhu’, the friend of the lily, because the latter blooms as soon as the moon rises)¹. Their eyebrows were perfectly curved in an arch, and their noses were equally crafted in an expert manner. (5)

[Note—¹The moonlight is deemed to create an environment of happiness and joy which leads to people feeling exhilarated and rejuvenated. The weariness of the day is replaced with cheer and energy. Young couples laugh and enjoy themselves in the soothing and inspiring light of the moon. But the smile and laughter of Lord Ram and Laxman creates an atmosphere of cheer and joy that far surpasses the charm created by the moon’s light. The moon feels ashamed and ridiculous when its glories and virtues are compared to those of the two brothers.

The moon’s pride of being a harbinger of cheer, happiness and joy is nullified and trounced when it is compared to the same virtues exhibited by Lord Ram and Laxman.]

भाल बिसाल तिलक झलकाहीं । कच बिलोकि अलि अवलि लजाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

bhāla bisāla tilaka jhalakāhīm. kaca bilōki ali avali lajāhīm. 6.

The ‘Tilak Mark’ (which is a mark on the forehead made by all of noble birth) on their broad foreheads were visible amid big locks of hairs that dangled from their heads. These locks of hairs were so attractive that they would put to shame a swarm of black bees. (6)

[Note—The two brothers had thick and large lock of black hairs which were plaited, and these tresses were carefully combed to make their faces look exceptionally beautiful. The sight resembled the moon's face when thick dark clouds hover just above it!

The Tilak mark consists of three horizontal lines marked on the forehead just above the root of the nose. So it looked as if the Tilak was a pillar that supported the meticulously carved and artistically arranged roof of hairs on their faces. Whenever they shook their heads or turned in any direction, the hairs parted from the center, revealing this fabulous Tilak mark.

The darkness and the density of the hair are compared to a swarm of black bees. These bees are very proud of their handsome black bodies, but when these bees are compared to the brothers' hairs, they fade in beauty and attractiveness.]

पीत चौतनीं सिरन्हि सुहाई । कुसुम कलीं बिच बीच बनाई ॥ ७ ॥

pīta cautanīm siranhi suhā'īm. kusuma kalīm bica bīca banā'īm. 7.

Yellow-coloured elegant caps (or turbans) of rectangular shape (pīta cautanīm)¹, on which were embroidered wonderful patterns resembling flower-buds, adorned their heads. (7)

[Note—¹A 'turban' looks more dignified and majestic on a prince or king's head than the humble 'cap'. Though it is not certain what the two brothers wore at the time, but in all probability it was a 'cap' rather than a 'turban' because it is said in this verse that the head gear was 'rectangular', and a turban is always wound around the head manually so that it takes up the circular shape of the head.]

रेखें रुचिर कंबु कल गीवाँ । जनु त्रिभुवन सुषमा की सीवाँ ॥ ८ ॥

rēkhēm rucira kambu kala gīvām. janu tribhuvana suṣamā kī sīvām. 8.

Their necks were well-built, smooth and well-shaped in contour like a conch-shell, and they also exhibited three semi-circular lines on the surface of the skin (like the lines marked on a conch-shell at its upper end). These lines symbolized the three worlds and stood as epitomes of beauty of these worlds. (8)

[Note—The neck is that part of the body that contains the vocal cords through which a wind passes and makes a sound that enables a person to make himself heard, loud and clear. It is likened to the conch because of this reason, for the conch also makes a loud sound when air is blown in it.

The neck had three fine folds in the skin resembling three lines present in the upper end of a conch-shell. Since these lines were parallel and one above the other, they resembled the three worlds—viz. the lower nether world, the middle terrestrial world, and the upper heavenly world. These three worlds are known as 'Tribhuvan'.

But all these worlds have some ugly aspect in them as well. So here it is said that this comparison with the three worlds does not mean that the three lines made the neck of the two brothers look ugly in any sense. Rather, they represented all the beautiful and wonderful aspects of this creation.]

दो०. कुंजर मनि कंठा कलित उरन्हि तुलसिका माल ।
बृषभ कंध केहरि ठवनि बल निधि बाहु बिसाल ॥ २४३ ॥

dōhā.

kunjara mani kaṇṭhā kalita uranhi tulasikā māla.
br̥ṣabha kandha kēhari ṭhavani bala nidhi bāhu bisāla. 243.

#A band made of ‘Gajmukta’ (“the elephant’s gem”, ‘kunjara mani’) adorned their necks¹.

Garlands of leaves of the Tulsi (Basil) plant adorned their chests.

Their shoulders were (muscular, rounded, high and broad) like the hump on the back of a healthy bull.

And the way they stood up and gestured resembled the majestic demeanours of a lion (the unquestionable ‘king of the forest’). (Doha no. 243)

[Note—¹The word “kunjara” means an elephant, and “mani” means a gem. The phrase refers to pearl-like dried globules of sap effusing from the head of mature elephants, and it is so extremely rare that great kings used them as gems that were embedded in the ornaments they wore just like priceless pearls and other precious jewels.

#Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal” that is exclusively dedicated to the divine marriage of Lord Ram and Sita describes the Lord’s glamour and magnificent sight in its verse nos. 49-54.

After describing the sublime beauty of the two brothers, now other attributes are being enumerated to remove any doubt that with such manicured bodies the two princes had delicate, fragile and weak frames. Of course they were beautiful and handsome, but that does not mean that they had weak bodies. Hence, their bodies are compared to that of a healthy bull and a lion, both of whom are very muscular and strong.]

चौ०. कटि तूनीर पीत पट बाँधें । कर सर धनुष बाम बर काँधें ॥ १ ॥
पीत जग्य उपबीत सुहाए । नख सिख मंजु महाछबि छाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaṭi tūnīra pīta paṭa bāṁdhēm̐. kara sara dhanuṣa bāma bara kām̐dhēm̐. 1.
pīta jagya upabīta suhā'ē. nakha sikha maṁju mahāchabi chā'ē. 2.

They had the Pitambar¹ wrapped around their waists and quivers tied securely above it. They held arrows in their hands, and bows were slung across their left shoulders. (1)

Yellow-coloured² sacred threads, known as the ‘Yagyopavit’, adorned their abdomen (because this thread is slung diagonally across the abdomen, going around the left shoulder).

In short, the two princes were exceedingly charming and looked fabulous from foot (or the 'toe nail' = 'Nakha') to head ('Sikh' = top of the skull) as if they were embodiments of the virtue of great beauty and magnificence. (2)

[Note—¹A 'Pitambar' is a length of seamless yellow silk cloth worn around the waist and wrapped around the two legs. It is a standard attire of Lord Vishnu.

²The colour 'yellow' is a favourite with warriors and royalty. This is why this colour has been chosen for the cloth worn by the two brothers as well as for the sacred thread. Though the Pitambar is usually yellow, but other colours such as white are also used under normal circumstances. On the other hand, the sacred is usually white, but yellow coloured thread is preferred on auspicious occasions such as a marriage and other religious ceremonies.]

देखि लोग सब भए सुखारे । एकटक लोचन चलत न तारे ॥ ३ ॥

dēkhi lōga saba bha'e sukhārē. ēkaṭaka lōcana calata na tārē. 3.

Watching this magnificent sight of the two brothers, all those present on the occasion felt very delighted and happy. The people gazed at the brothers un-blinkingly, the pupils of their eyes riveted unmovingly on the latter. (3)

[Note—The entire assembly was closely watching Lord Ram and Laxman. The attention of each single man and woman was fixed on them. Remember: All the citizens had rushed to the venue just to see Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240). They were not concerned with and interested in the wonderful spectacle that unfolded by the presence of countless kings and princes from every corner of earth.]

हरषे जनकु देखि दोउ भाई । मुनि पद कमल गहे तब जाई ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣē janaku dēkhi dō'u bhā'ī. muni pada kamala gahē taba jā'ī. 4.

King Janak felt exhilarated upon seeing the two brothers. Then he came forward and caught hold of the lotus-like feet of the sage (Vishwamitra) (to welcome him at the venue and also to pay his respects to the great sage)¹. (4)

[Note—¹The king holding the feet of sage Vishwamitra has another connotation also. He subtly and silently begged, pleaded and implored with the mighty sage, who had great mystical powers and could turn the course of events if he so wished, to use his spiritual powers to somehow steer the course of developments to favour Lord Ram.

Another reason for Janak holding the feet of sage Vishwamitra was to ask the sage to forgive him for organising a ceremony wherein Lord Shiva's bow would be broken. This was done by the king because the sage was a worshipper of Lord Shiva, and the sage had to be kept in good humour and pleased for fear of punishment and curse at the temerity and the audacity of blatantly summoning all kings to publicly break Lord Shiva's bow. So the king held the sage's feet to pre-empt such an eventuality.

He wished to convey to the sage that he had no intention to insult or undermine Lord Shiva's divinity and supreme stature as the Great God of creation; perish even the thought of it. The only motivating factor was just to find the strongest and the most able husband for his daughter Sita.]

करि बिनती निज कथा सुनाई । रंग अवनि सब मुनिहि देखाई ॥ ५ ॥

kari binatī nija kathā sunā'ī. raṅga avani saba munihi dēkhā'ī. 5.

The king prayed to the sage most politely and told him his own story (i.e. the reason behind organising the bow-breaking ceremony)¹. Then he took (escorted) the sage around the arena to show him the place and the arrangements. (5)

[Note—¹The king told the sage that he has organised the bow-breaking ceremony to identify the most strong, able and valiant warrior to whom Sita would be married. The bow was not an ordinary one; it was Lord Shiva's bow and therefore it was not a joke to lift it. Only someone who has mighty powers and upon whom Lord Shiva is pleased would be able to achieve success. This ensured that Sita would be in safe and able hands; her security and safety was certain with such a husband.

Now, let us read the story of the great and formidable 'Bow'. It is described in Valmiki's Ramayana, in its Baal Kand, Canto 66, verse nos. 7-13. Briefly the story is as follows—In the dynasty of king Nimi (ancestor of Janak), there was an ancient king named Devraat. This bow was received by him for safe-keeping. The story goes that when Prajapati Daksha had organised a fire sacrifice, he had invited all the gods but neglected Shiva due to some past ill-will. The selfish gods partook of the offerings made during the fire sacrifice without bothering that their chief, Lord Shiva, was not invited.

This enraged Shiva, and he had strung this bow to destroy the fire sacrifice of Daksha as punishment. After that, he scolded the gods and threatened them that he would cut off their heads with the help of that bow for the insult inflicted upon him by them collectively. They should have refused to participate in the fire sacrifice when Shiva was not invited, and should not have partaken of the offerings.

The terrified gods somehow managed to placate Shiva. Then he gave this bow to them to keep it safely somewhere. The gods then kept the bow with king Devraat for safe-keeping.

This story also appears in the Kurma Puran.

In Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 11-21, the story pertaining to the bow is as follows:--Sage Parashuram had told Lord Ram that Vishwakarma, the craftsman and builder of the gods, had meticulously constructed two bows. Out of them, the gods gave one, the bow that was broken by Lord Ram, to Shiva who used it to slay the demon named Tripuraasur. The other bow was given by the gods to Lord Vishnu.

At that time the gods enquired from Brahma (creator) who was stronger—Vishnu or Shiva. To determine this, Brahma created a situation wherein some misunderstanding was created between Vishnu and Shiva, as a result of which a formidable battle raged between them. Shiva's bow could not match the might and abilities of Vishnu's bow, and Shiva himself was vexed when Vishnu grunted ferociously. The decision was obvious—Vishnu was superior. Since this battle was devised to test them, and the result was obvious now, the gods and sages came to beg with Vishnu and Shiva to calm down. Lord Shiva was frustrated and angry at his bow that it had let him down in the confrontation. So he wanted to discard it. He gave the bow along with its arrow to king Devraat.

In Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 68-70, king Janak has said that after slaying the demon Tripuraasur, Lord Shiva had kept this bow with his grandfather, king Devraat. Since this bow was very destructive and feared by all, Janak decided to get rid of it by getting it broken during the marriage ceremony of his daughter Sita.

Kavitawali of Tulsidas also endorses this story that Lord Shiva had got this bow made with the specific aim of killing the demon Tripuraasur. Refer: Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 10, stanza no. 1.

The same story also appears in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 80.

The fact that this bow was employed to slay Tripuraa has been hinted in the present book Ram Charit Manas also—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 250; and Doha no. 271.

King Janak further told sage Vishwamitra, while narrating his story, that once he was ploughing a field when the tip of his ploughshare got stuck in the ground. Upon investigation it was discovered that it was pot in which infant Sita was found. Janak brought her home and brought her up as his own daughter.

In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 61-68, it is narrated that one day when king Janak was sitting alone, sage Narad had come to visit him. The sage informed him that Lord Vishnu has come down to this earth in the form of Lord Ram and his three brothers, and that the Lord's cosmic Maya has come to his household as Sita. Lord Ram and Sita have an eternal union. So the sage advised him to devise a way to re-establish this union at the worldly plane because it would provide him great merit and welfare. The king had been thinking of some way to make this happen. Then he realised that Shiva's old and rusty bow should be used as a means to test who among the kings and princes on earth was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu because only he would have the guts and the strength to break Lord Shiva's mighty bow. Hence, the king had organised this ceremony.

There is a traditional story that says that one day Sita's mother was busy in some household work and she asked Sita to clean the platform where the bow was kept. Sita lifted the bow easily in order to clean the platform below it. This was a stunningly miraculous act as the bow was extremely heavy and mighty. So, Sita's parents decided that the correct match for her would be someone who could lift the bow and string it.]

जहँ जहँ जाहिं कुअँर बर दोऊ । तहँ तहँ चकित चितव सबु कोऊ ॥ ६ ॥

निज निज रुख रामहि सबु देखा । कोउ न जान कछु मरमु बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥

jaham̃ jaham̃ jāhim̃ ku'am̃ra bara dō'ū. taham̃ taham̃ cakita citava sabu kō'ū. 6.
nija nija rukha rāmahī sabu dēkhā. kō'u na jāna kachu maramu bisēṣā. 7.

Wherever the two wonderful princes went (along with sage Vishwamitra who was being escorted around the arena by king Janak), everyone there stared at them, fascinated with wander and awe at their sight.¹ (6)

Everyone saw Lord Ram according to the conception he or she had of him. No one could realize the mystery of this miracle (as to how the same person can appear differently in countless forms to different people).² (7)

[Note—¹Everyone was equally eager to have a close-up view of Lord Ram and Laxman. So the creator arranged to motivate king Janak to escort sage Vishwamitra around the arena to show him the place and the arrangements which were lavish to the extreme.

Remember: The venue was circular like a huge stadium. At the center of it was the raised platform where the Bow was kept, and all round it were the seats for the invited guest, the competitors, and the citizens. King Janak has made special arrangements for sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Doha no. 244

below. So those near this place could have a good view, but those on the opposite side of the stadium could not see them so distinctly.

When Lord Ram and Laxman went around the circular venue, all the assembled people had an equal opportunity to see their beloved Lord up close. So, they craned their necks and gleefully had their eyes-full view of the wonderful sight of the two brothers walking past them majestically. Indeed, all of them must have thanked their good luck as well as king Janak to make their dream come true.

The king was well aware of the overwhelming and warmest of receptions that the two brothers had got when they had gone sight-seeing inside the city of Janakpur the evening of their arrival; the entire city had poured out to see them. Once again, Janak watched in amusement as the entire gentry of the city poured in as soon as the news spread that Lord Ram and Laxman are arriving at the bow-breaking venue. So, being a king, he felt that it was his duty and responsibility towards his subjects that he gives them equal opportunity to see the two brothers. The only way to do it was to take them around the venue, but it would be impolite not to take sage Vishwamitra also for the round. Hence, king Janak escorted all the three—sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman—round the venue.]

There was another reason why king Janak took them around the altar where the Bow was kept. It is a well-established tradition that when one wants to pay respect or homage to some revered entity, such as a worshipped deity in a temple, he goes around it in a circle, a process called ‘doing Parikrama’ or circumambulation of the entity worshipped. This is a standard practice in all temples where a corridor is specially constructed around the sanctum sanctorum where the worshipped deity’s idol is installed so that the worshipper can do this circumambulation.

Now, the Bow was Lord Shiva’s, and hence it was worthy of greatest respect and honour. Going around it would help to reiterate that Janak has not the remotest intention to dishonour the mighty Bow of Lord Shiva by getting it broken. As we have read in the note to verse no. 5 above, this Bow was despised by all as it was a reminder of destruction unleashed when Shiva used it to vanquish Tripuraasur, his threatening to slay all the gods with it as they had insulted him by participating in Daksha Prajapat’s fire sacrifice and accepting offerings when Shiva was neglected by the host, and more importantly as a sad reminder of Shiva’s defeat in the confrontation with Lord Vishnu. So, no one liked the Bow; even Lord Shiva had despised it.

Therefore, no one would take offence when it is broken. It was old, decrepit, rusty and ugly to look at, and its reputation was mired by negativity throughout its existence. But in spite of all this, it was in Lord Shiva’s hand once, and therefore it deserved respect. Hence, by going around it on the excuse of showing sage Vishwamitra the whole place, king Janak had indirectly paid his respects to the Bow, and in the process had made the sage, Lord Ram and Laxman pay this respect too. It’s so wise of Janak.

²This fact has already been described above from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

Now, as far as the ‘miracle of the Lord assuming so many forms simultaneously’ is concerned, we shall read later on that when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya from his forest exile after victory in the war of Lanka, all the citizens of Ayodhya were eager to personally embrace and welcome the Lord. There were not only hundreds or thousands of them, but many hundred-thousands of them wanting to express their love and affection to the Lord. At that time the same miracle happened—Lord Ram assumed as many forms as there were people. Each embraced him personally, thinking that he was the only person personally meeting the Lord. No one had realized then also the mystery of this magical phenomenon. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

Well, the mystery is solved when we realize that Lord Ram was no ordinary human being but an incarnation or manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of the world. The Lord has 'Maya', the power to create delusions, as one of his countless powers. And it was this Maya that was employed by the Lord to create the delusion that he is present in countless forms, meeting each individual separately.

The same thing has happened here. Lord Ram had employed his power of Maya to make the people see countless forms of his self according to the way they perceived him.

From the spiritual point of view this means that every devotee and worshipper sees the supreme Lord in the way he likes to see him, and the Lord obliges all of them by making himself available to them in the way they would like to adore and worship him. For instance, some see in him their Lord, others see him as their friend, still others as their Father and Mother or parent, and some as perceive the Lord as their Guru. The Lord obliges them all. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130 where sage Valmiki lists them as their heart is the habitat of the Lord.

Besides this, Lord Ram is actually the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing and cosmic form of the Supreme Being. Every single entity of creation, all living beings known as the Jiva, are his form. This cosmic conception of the Lord envisages that he has thousands of hands, legs, heads, eyes and mouths. Refer the note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 242. Hence it is no wonder that every onlooker saw the same image of the Lord differently according to his personal preference and conception.

Refer also to "Geetawali" of Tulsidas, verse nos 64, stanza no.4.]

भलि रचना मुनि नृप सन कहेऊ । राजाँ मुदित महासुख लहेऊ ॥ ८ ॥

bhali racanā muni nrpa sana kahē'ū. rājām' mudita mahāsukha lahē'ū. 8.

The sage (Vishwamitra) expressed his satisfaction at the arrangements and appreciation for the king when he told the latter that the arena was indeed really well-planned and constructed. When the king learnt that the sage was pleased, he felt very happy and delighted. (8)

[Note—The king felt delighted and happy because the sage had not shown any sort of resentment or anger at Janak for first having the temerity of organizing the breaking of Shiva's Bow, and then having the audacity to take the sage around the arena to show-off his wealth and pomp. The sage was very wise and a practical man, and so he realized that the king has taken him around the venue as a token of welcome and respect as the host always takes his special guests around the venue of any great ceremony to show him the place personally.]

The sage was happy that this walk also informed all those present, the citizens as well as the invited guests and the competing kings and princes that the real hero, Lord Ram, has come. Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was not an inconsequential sage or seer, for his greatness and mystical powers were world-famous. This was one of the other primary reasons for Janak taking the sage around the venue—so that all those present on the occasion could have a 'Darshan' or divine view of such a great sage. It would be a rare privilege for everyone present there. This privilege would be raised to new heights when the people would have the golden opportunity to see the two majestic princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, with him, fulfilling their wishes.]

दो०. सब मंचन्ह तें मंचु एक सुंदर बिसद बिसाल ।
मुनि समेत दोउ बंधु तहँ बैठारे महिपाल ॥ २४४ ॥

dōhā.

saba mañcanha tēm mañcu ēka sundara bisada bisāla.
muni samēta dō'u bandhu taham̐ baiṭhārē mahipāla. 244.

Of all the elevated seats constructed to seat invited guest, the king and princes along with their family members and ministers, one was specially high and magnificent to look at. The 'Mahipaal' ('Mahi' = land, earth; 'Paal' = its lord or caretaker; i.e. king Janak) seated the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) alongside the sage (Vishwamitra) on this special seat. (Doha no. 244)

[Note—The seats were arranged in tiers, at greater height at the back and lower at the front so that everyone would have a clear view of the Bow. Now, the wise king knew that kings and princes do not come alone but are invariably accompanied by their ministers and courtiers. So, small raised platforms were constructed, each having a number of seats, so that a particular guest's attendants and friends could sit alongside him.

A special seat was prepared for the sage and the two brothers. After doing the round of the venue, king Janak took them there and respectfully seated them.

Remember: The only exalted sage to attend the ceremony was sage Vishwamitra. So, the king had to show him special treatment to honour his exalted stature.]

चौ०. प्रभुहि देखि सब नृप हियँ हारे । जनु राकेस उदय भएँ तारे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

prabhuhi dēkhi saba nr̥pa hiyam̐ hārē. janu rākēsa udaya bha'ēm̐ tārē. 1.

When the kings who had arrived to participate in the competition to lift the Bow saw the Lord (Sri Ram), they lost their enthusiasm, became sad because they lost all hopes of victory, and as a consequence they felt crestfallen and became lack-lustre just like the stars look inconsequential when the full moon rises in the sky. (1)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/80, stanza no. 5 also.

This idea has already been expressed by Laxman earlier in Baal Kand, Doha no. 238, albeit by referring to the sun instead of the full moon.

Again, this same idea is expressed by the narrator Tulsidas in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 241 while describing the scene at the venue when Lord Ram had arrived there. See relevant notes appended to these verses.]

असि प्रतीति सब के मन माहीं । राम चाप तोरब सक नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
बिनु भंजेहुँ भव धनुषु बिसाला । मेलिहि सीय राम उर माला ॥ ३ ॥

अस बिचारि गवनहु घर भाई । जसु प्रतापु बलु तेजु गवाई ॥ ४ ॥

asi pratīti saba kē mana māhīr̥. rāma cāpa tōraba saka nāhīr̥. 2.
binu bhanjēhum̐ bhava dhanuṣu bisālā. mēlihi sīya rāma ura mālā. 3.
asa bicāri gavanahu ghara bhāī. jasu pratāpu balu tēju gavāmī. 4.

All of them (the competing kings and princes) were convinced in their Mana (heart and mind) that Lord Ram would definitely break the Bow; there is no doubt in it. (2).

But in the eventuality that Lord Ram desists from breaking the Bow (because he may not like to touch it out of reverence as it was Lord Shiva's Bow), then also Sita would put the victory garland around his neck (to declare her clear intentions of choosing him as her groom). (3)

(So they discussed the matter amongst themselves and advised each other, saying—) 'So brothers, it is better to go home (and avoid sure public humiliation) before it is too late and we lose our dignity, prestige and self-respect, before our famed strength, valour and glories are decimated, and we are subjected to immense public embarrassment and humiliation.' (4)

[Note—A pall of gloom had descended upon all the the kings and princes who had come to break the bow; they were dejected and hopeless. The aura of mystical powers, authority and invincibility that surrounded Lord Ram together with the fact that he was blessed, protected and patronized by the mighty sage Vishwamitra and was shown special attention by the host, king Janak, convinced all the kings and their attendants that it is useless and senseless to attempt to break the bow, and it would be wiser and prudent to desist from proving a fool of themselves.

They had already watched how the citizens of Janakpur were bowled-over and enthralled by the two brothers. So they deduced that if Sita wishes to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck to symbolize her decision to marry him, she would not only be supported by her father Janak but also by the entire citizenry of Janakpur. So in that case, if these kings tried to resist and raise an objection, they would be cornered and king Janak may order his huge army to imprison them. Remember: These invited kings and princes had not brought their armies along with them; they had not come prepared for a battle.

So, the wiser ones amongst them advised their friends that it is better to maintain their self-respect and dignity before it is too late to preserve it. It is better to return home and make an excuse, something like saying—'We have come just to oblige king Janak who had sent us an invitation. We came here to witness this great event when his daughter is to be married. This is a polite and courteous call to thank king Janak for sending us an invitation to attend his daughter's marriage. We had no intention at all to participate in the competition to break the bow. We respect Lord Shiva, and would never imagine of ever attempting to break the Lord's Bow.'

This formula will help them to save their faces from sure disgrace, humiliation and infamy. This is the right time to back-out.

In Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse no. 57 it is said that the kings lost hope because they felt that king Janak would break his own vow and choose Lord Ram as the groom for his daughter Sita. In verse no. 58 it is said that the good kings amongst the group said that it would be alright if Janak does so, as Lord Ram is the appropriate groom for Sita.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256 we find that Sita's mother has lamented at the decision of sage Vishwamitra at ordering Lord Ram to go and break the Bow. She tells her companion—"Will anyone advise the

Guru (sage Vishwamitra) that it is highly unwise to allow the tender prince to try his hand at the bow because he is still a boy and not a fully grown adult. Why, even the formidable king of demons, Ravana, and another mighty demon named Banasur had not dared to touch the bow out of fear of certain defeat. All other kings too got defeated even though they had all boasted that they would break it like it was a lotus stem. Why then does the sage allow this boy of a delicate body to do something that is bound to humiliate him? Can a young swan ever lift the mighty mountain known as Mt. Mandara? What has happened to the wisdom of the king (Janak); has his mind taken leave of him? ”

This means that the queen would have preferred that since no other competitor has been able to lift and break the bow, let Sita be now married to the prince of her choice. After all, no king or prince could raise an objection now because equal opportunity was given to all of them, but they all failed the test. Now, Janak is morally free to marry Sita in the way he thinks fit for her future happiness.

Remember: The citizens have also been thinking on this line already. This fact is stated in Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali” in its Baal Kand, verse nos. 70.]

बिहसे अपर भूप सुनि बानी । जे अबिबेक अंध अभिमानी ॥ ५ ॥
 तोरेहुँ धनुषु व्याहु अवगाहा । बिनु तोरें को कुअँरि बिआहा ॥ ६ ॥
 एक बार कालउ किन होऊ । सिय हित समर जितब हम सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥

bihasē apara bhūpa suni bānī. jē abibēka andha abhimānī. 5.
 tōrēhum’ dhanuṣu byāhu avagāhā. binu tōrēm kō ku’am’ri bi’āhā. 6.
 ēka bāra kāla’u kina hō’ū. siya hita samara jitaba hama sō’ū. 7.

But not all kings were wise and prudent. Some were exceptionally foolish, being blinded by arrogance and a false sense of pride and ego. They laughed derisively and rebuked those who had advised them to desist from attempting to break the bow. Such haughty kings said arrogantly—(5)

‘Marriage is a distant dream because first the bow has to be broken. How can anyone even dream of marrying the princess without breaking the bow?’¹ (6)

Even if Kaal (the god of death) comes to interfere and we have to fight with him, then we will defeat him and obtain victory in order to marry Sita.’ (7)

[Note—¹The haughty kings were answering the wise king’s advice. The latter had said that Sita would put the victory garland around Lord Ram’s neck even if he does not break the bow. Refer: Chaupai line no. 3 just above these present Chaupais.

These arrogant kings took this as an affront to their ego and dignity. They decided that if they drew back it would be tantamount to accepting defeat even without a chance to try their might and luck, something which was unpalatable for their inflated ego. They were livid at the suggestion that they should give up their claim, which was like accepting defeat even without a fight.

They declared in one voice that they were ready to fight it out and wage a war if they are prevented from lifting and breaking the bow, and if any attempt is made to marry Sita to Lord Ram by circumventing this condition that she would be married to anyone who breaks the bow then what to talk of human beings, they would defeat the ‘god of death’ known as Kaal himself in a battle that is sure to ensue. In fact, we read a little later that when the kings had failed to move the bow and it was finally broken by Lord Ram, all these envious kings, driven by jealousy and hate, rose up in revolt, threatening to wage a

war and capturing the two brothers, and even king Janak if he tried to protect them: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 266.

These verses show the delicate and sensitive nature of the situation. And this also shows how impractical it was for Janak to marry Sita to Lord Ram at this late juncture. There was full certainty of a revolt by the invited kings and princes, and even if Janak succeeded in subduing them as they were within his realm and lacked the support of a full-fledged army, the repercussions would be horrific. When these kings returned home with a sullen face and angry at being denied an opportunity to break the bow and marry Sita, there were fair chances they all of them would team together to jointly collect a huge army to attack and plunder Janakpur, inviting unimaginable horrors for its innocent citizens.

Remember: Janakpur was a prosperous kingdom, and it would be laid to waste by attacking armies of angry kings who would be smarting from insult and humiliation meted out to them by Janak if he clandestinely somehow managed to prevent them from making their attempt to break the bow and marry Sita.

Hence, inspite of his internal wish to make this union happen, he could not do it.]

यह सुनि अवर महिप मुसुकाने । धरमसील हरिभगत सयाने ॥ ८ ॥

yaha suni avara mahipa musukānē. dharamasīla haribhagata sayānē. 8.

Hearing the rant and the arrogant words of haughty kings, the wise kings who believed in following the laws of Dharma (probity and propriety; good conduct and thinking; taking any action after duly considering all the pros and cons)^{1*}, and who were devotees of Lord Hari (Vishnu)², were dismayed even as they smiled sarcastically and wryly at them (at the stupidity of these belligerent and haughty kings, and the way they are voluntarily inviting sure ridicule upon themselves). (8)

[Note—¹The wise kings had guessed that if the two brothers were accompanied by the exalted sage Vishwamitra, who by all accounts was showing extra affection for them, then they are sure to be of noble birth and followers of Dharma, the laws of good conduct and manners.

Then when they saw Sita they observed that she was very young, and not at all suitable for kings or princes much older in age than her. The only candidate that matched her age was Lord Ram. Though Laxman too fit the bill, but these wise kings were intelligent enough to deduce that out of the two brothers, Lord Ram was elder. This is because they observed that Lord Ram was always a step ahead of Laxman who was always behind him as the two brothers accompanied sage Vishwamitra while he was being shown around the venue by king Janak. The law of proper conduct and thinking says that one must not marry a girl too young in age as compared to oneself as this would be a misfit match and unethical. If one insists on this marriage then he is sure to be a lustful, greedy and selfish man as he has no bother to respect the girl's wishes and only wants to satisfy his own passions and gratify his sensual urges.

²We have already read earlier that devotees of Lord Hari had seen their Lord in the form of the two brothers—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 242. Some of the invited kings were devotees of Lord Hari. So, amongst the assembled kings there were many who worshipped Lord Hari as their patron deity, and when they observed that they had a vision of Hari in the form of the two brothers the immediately decided that there was some mystery in this vision and it would be best for them to act prudently and

avoid taking any step that would directly or indirectly cause offense to their Lord Hari. These were the kings this present verse is referring to.

There is one very important reason to delineate the ‘good kings’ from the others. These ‘good kings’ are honoured as being observers of the law of Dharma, while the rest as being reckless, egoist and selfish. We shall read in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 below that when individual kings failed to move the bow, ten thousand kings proceeded to lift the bow together! Imagine the horrible consequences for Sita if they had managed to lift and break the bow. She would have to become a ‘wife of ten thousand husbands’, an absurd proposition and most ridiculous. These mad kings did not think even twice before deciding to lift the bow together in such huge numbers, violating all norms of decency and ethics. That is why all the kings who attempted to lift the bow and who had arrogantly said that no one can marry Sita without breaking the bow, are deemed to be against the laws of Dharma.

*Let us now examine the qualities of these three groups of kings carefully.

(i) The first group consisted of those kings who preferred to abstain from lifting the bow as they guessed that Janak, the host and the father of Sita, has already decided to marry her to Lord Ram and therefore it is wiser and prudent not to enter into any confrontation on a foreign soil for the sake of a girl. A wise king is one who knows when to make a strategic retreat and when to fight; he is able to judge the prevailing condition correctly and decide what is good and what is not for his future welfare and self-respect. In other words, such kings are not pretentious, egoist, arrogant, blinded by recklessness and driven by greed.

Further, they had also heard that Sita was of a very young age, much younger than them. So it would be unethical and immoral to marry a girl who was of an age that their daughters would have been.

This group of kings (described in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 245) were the wise kings and dominated by the ‘Raja Guna’ as they could think intelligently and wisely as what to do and what not to. The word ‘king’ translates into ‘Raja’ in Hindi, and the word ‘Guna’ means the inherent qualities of an entity (a person or thing) that is most characteristic of it. Hence, this common noun ‘Raja’ perfectly suits such kings.

(ii) The second group of kings (described in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245) was driven by negative qualities of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity and haughtiness. These are dark qualities in a man which eclipses his intelligence and wisdom. Such a man becomes blind to realities and is driven by greed and lust. These qualities are known as ‘Tama Guna’ or dark qualities. Hence, those kings who were arrogant and determined to have Sita even if this means blood-shed were Tama Guna dominated kings. Such people always face ignominy and degradation.

(iii) Finally, the third category of kings (described from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246) was one which worshipped Lord Hari, was god-fearing and ethical. The kings of this group decided that it would be extremely immoral to marry a girl who is of an age that their daughters would be, and when they saw Lord Ram as an image of Lord Hari they decided that Sita was none else but the divine consort of the Lord, known as the Mother Goddess or ‘Jagdambika’. They have made this observation abundantly clear below in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 246.

Hence, this group was both “Dharamsheel” (followers of laws of Dharma) as well as “Hari-bhakta” (devotees of Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu). These kings had the ‘Sata Guna’ as the dominant characteristic.]

सौ०. सीय बिआहबि राम गरब दूरि करि नृपन्ह के ।
जीति को सक संग्राम दसरथ के रन बाँकुरे ॥ २४५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sīya bi'āhabi rāma garaba dūri kari nṛpanha kē.
jīti kō saka saṅgrāma dasaratha kē rana bām'kurē. 245.

[The wise amongst the assembled kings thought themselves inwardly as follows as they tried their best to persuade the defiant kings and princes so that they can come to their senses and see the light of reason in these words—]

‘Lord Ram would definitely marry Sita and thereby vanquish the haughtiness and arrogance of these (foolish) kings. Say, who can defeat the invincible and valiant sons of king Dasrath in a battle? (Doha no. 245)

[Note—Well, the “battle” here is ‘who manages to break the bow and marry Sita’. All the kings were pitted against each other in this ‘battle royale’; every one of them was vying to break the bow first and push the competitor behind because the first person to break the bow would be able to marry Sita. If the chance is lost, it is lost for good.

These kings had a false sense of strength and invincibility. So the wise kings decided that their ego and arrogance would be trounced the moment Lord Ram breaks the bow and marries Sita. In this battle for breaking the bow and acquiring Sita as the trophy, who would stand a chance, individually or collectively, against Lord Ram?

Remember: Lord Ram belonged to a family of kings who were so powerful that they provided support to even Indra, the king of gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25. Therefore these ordinary kings and princes stood no chance of winning any battle for Sita if the things come to such a pass that a battle has to be actually fought for her. This talk that “we will defeat even Kaal” is merely big-mouthed boast.

There was a very important development round this time which convinced the good and wise kings that it is “certain that Lord Ram would be the one who would finally win and marry Sita”. What was this development, and how did these kings get a clear hint of things to come? Well, a little later we shall read that “the gods who had assembled in the sky to watch the spectacle, and they showered flowers on Lord Ram and Laxman” exclusively in the large gathering of kings and princes. If the gods showered flowers on Lord Ram to the exclusion of others it was a clear signal that they all favoured the Lord over the rest of the competitors. And anyone whom the gods favour is sure to win and succeed in any enterprise. The showering of flowers was very clear to all those present, but only the wise kings could decipher its implications on the outcome of the competition. The showering of the flowers by the gods settled the matter for good—that the victorious competitor would be Lord Ram. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 246 that appears below.]

चौ०. व्यर्थ मरहु जनि गाल बजाई । मन मोदकन्हि कि भूख बुताई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

byartha marahu jani gāla bajāī. mana mōdakanhi ki bhūkha butāī. 1.

[Presently, the good and reasonable kings spoke to their peers in a last ditch attempt to persuade them to abandon their recklessness and foolish attitude as follows—]

‘Do not unnecessarily brag arrogantly and die (i.e. be defeated, face ignominy and humiliation as well as ridicule) for a cause that makes no sense at all.

Say, can anyone’s hunger be satiated with imaginary sweets? (1)

[Note—The honourable and god-fearing kings tried their best to prevail upon the arrogant kings to see reason and not create a piquant situation from which there was no going back without losing dignity and self-respect. By comparing their determination to marry Sita with trying to satisfy one’s hunger by eating imaginary sweets these noble and virtuous Sata Guna kings advised their Tama Guna dominated compatriots that they should not be stupid and make a joke of themselves, that they should act wisely as their chances of breaking the bow and marrying Sita was no better than an attempt to fill one’s stomach with imaginary food.

This talk that they would fight and kill Kaal (god of death) to marry Sita if he interfered (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 245) was nothing but mere boast as Kaal does not spare even the gods all of whom would have to die one day at the end of one cycle of creation, though their life-span is huge when compared to the life of ordinary mortals on earth.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 60 wherein the good kings had ridiculed those who were arrogant by saying—“Aren’t you all ashamed of yourselves; you fellows don’t have the guts to look up directly eye-to-eye at Lord Ram, and in spite of it you boast so much. You already feel so inferior, so why do you plan to subject yourselves to further humiliation and ridicule, inviting shame and proving yourselves utterly stupid?”]

सिख हमारि सुनि परम पुनीता । जगदंबा जानहु जियँ सीता ॥ २ ॥

जगत पिता रघुपतिहि बिचारी । भरि लोचन छबि लेहु निहारी ॥ ३ ॥

sikha hamāri suni parama punītā. jagadambā jānahu jiyam’ sītā. 2.
jagata pitā raghupatihi bicārī. bhari lōcana chabi lēhu nihārī. 3.

Listen to our advice (‘sikha’) which is impartial, based on purity of thought and emotions, and is judicious, prudent and uncourrupted by any personal vested interest (‘punītā’). [That is, don’t misunderstand us when we try to dissuade you from trying to lift and break the bow in the belief that we are taking sides with Janak or have been somehow under his influence, or that we have devised some cunning device by which we would first deter you from tackling the bow and then Janak will find some excuse to let us marry Sita. Perish the evil thought; there is no such cunning and conceit in our mind. What we advise you is in good faith and in all honesty of opinion.]

Regard Sita in your heart as being none else but the Mother of the world (‘jagadambā’) herself personified. (2)

Similarly, treat Lord Ram as the Father of the world (‘jagata pitā’). [In other words, they are divine couples whose union is eternal. They are eternally united with

each other as Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord of creation, and Sita is the Lord's divine consort known as Mother Goddess.]

Hence, you must all enjoy this moment and make the most out of this rare and golden opportunity to fill your eyes with this divine and holy sight that is most magnificent and beautiful to behold (instead of being foolish, and not only missing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity but also proving yourselves stupid and ridiculous by attempting to act smart and interfering with something that is inevitable in the scheme of things predestined by the Creator).

[Say, why don't you all enjoy, rejoice in and delight at the wonderful, the most fascinating, the beguiling and appealing sight of the two lovely brothers sitting on either side of the sage, a scene that you will never see again not only in this life but also in thousands of lives in your future? Wouldn't you feel ashamed of yourselves and regret later on if you let this chance slip by from your hands out of pretentious sense of false greatness, majesty and superiority arising out of your ignorance and arrogance.] (3)

सुंदर सुखद सकल गुन रासी । ए दोउ बंधु संभु उर बासी ॥ ४ ॥

sundara sukhada sakala guna rāsī. ē dō'u bandhu sambhu ura bāsī. 4.

These two handsome and charming brothers are embodiments of magnificent virtues and bestowers of bliss and happiness. They live in the heart of Lord Shiva¹. (4)

[Note—¹How do we know that they (Lord Ram and Laxman) live in the heart of Shiva? Well, it is Shiva himself who requests the Lord to live in his heart—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 115. This is the occasion when Lord Shiva has come to offer his prayers to Lord Ram after the victory at Lanka over the demon king Ravana. Lord Shiva requested Lord Ram—“Oh Lord, my request is that you should live in my heart along with your younger brother (Laxman) and Janki (Sita).”

This verse has a profound implication. Since “the two divine brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, live in the heart of Lord Shiva”, it implies that they are very dear to Shiva, and also that they know the internal wish and thoughts of Shiva. This translates into practical terms to mean that Shiva will never oppose Lord Ram's wish to break his bow. Remember: Lord Shiva is also not very happy with this bow as it reminds him of a past incident when it let him (Shiva) down during a confrontation with Vishnu. So, Shiva would want that this constant reminder of his inferiority to Vishnu is destroyed forever, and if this makes his beloved Lord Ram happy and serves the latter's purpose, nothing can be better. Both Lord Shiva and Lord Ram would be equally happy!

Therefore, when Lord Ram decided to go and break the bow he was not, in any way at all, either confronting Shiva or insulting the latter. There was a subtle mutual understanding between them that it should be done. This is also the reason why sage Parashuram, who had come angrily to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow as the Lord was his patron deity, could not harm Lord Ram inspite of all his jumping around madly, and his angry words threatening to kill the person who had dared to break the bow came to a naught.]

सुधा समुद्र समीप बिहाई । मृगजलु निरखि मरहु कत धाई ॥ ५ ॥

करहु जाइ जा कहूँ जोइ भावा । हम तौ आजु जनम फलु पावा ॥ ६ ॥
 अस कहि भले भूप अनुरागे । रूप अनूप बिलोकन लागे ॥ ७ ॥

sudhā samudra samīpa bihā'ī. mṛgajalu nirakhi marahu kata dhā'ī. 5.
 karahu jā'i jā kahum'jō'i bhāvā. hama tau āju janama phalu pāvā. 6.
 asa kahi bhalē bhūpa anurāgē. rūpa anūpa bilōkana lāgē. 7.

Why would anyone (be stupid enough to) discard an ocean of nectar ('Sudhaa Samudra') which is very near, and instead run behind a mirage (seen in the hot desert) in search of water (to quench his thirst)¹? (5)

Do whatever you like. As far as we ² are concerned, we feel that today we have been given the fruit (reward) of taking birth in this life. [In other words, we feel very glad that we were invited to Janakpur to witness this divine marriage between Lord Ram and Sita in front of our eyes. We would have missed this golden chance otherwise.]³ (6)

Saying this, the honourable and good kings were filled with affection (for their beloved Lord) and took great pleasure in watching the magnificent beauty of the image of the two brothers (as well as the spectacle that unfolded before their eyes). (7)

[Note—¹This verse is a sort of rebuke for the unwise kings. Why should they run around trying to find happiness and joy in life in a distant and illusive future when the same happiness and joy is available right now? Do they think that by merely marrying Sita they would get happiness? It is absolutely uncertain, and in fact it proved otherwise for Lord Ram too.

Remember: It was Sita's abduction by Ravana that led to so much misery for Lord Ram in the forest, making him wonder in the dense forest in in her search, collecting a motley army of monkeys and bears to launch an assault on her captors which culminated in the destructive war of Lanka and a lot of bloodshed. Even after returning to Ayodhya and being crowned its king, a time came when, due to certain events, the Lord had to abandon Sita himself and be separated from her till the end of his life on earth. Both Sita and Lord Ram had suffered in the end of their lives on this earth, and it was never a story of a happy ending which read something like “---and they lived happily ever after”.

In other words, the view that if these kings managed to marry Sita they would find happiness is just a pipe dream like attempting to quench thirst by pursuing the mirage in search of water. Instead, why don't they enjoy the present?

²The word “we” refers to the third category of honourable and wise kings who are trying to make the unwise and arrogant kings see reason.

³Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 12; and verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 5 also.]

देखहिं सुर नभ चढ़े बिमाना । बरषहिं सुमन करहिं कल गाना ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhahim sura nabha caṛhē bimānā. baraṣahim sumana karahim kala gānā. 8.

The gods rode their air-planes and watched the proceedings from the sky. They showered flowers and sang melodious songs (to celebrate the occasion). (8)

[Note—The gods have showered flowers now when Lord Ram and Laxman arrived and took their seats at the venue. The gods would shower flowers once again when Sita

arrives at the scene—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 248.

Remember: Showering of flowers is a gesture showing extreme happiness and a warm welcome. Flowers are showered on auspicious occasions. Thus, the gods were exhibiting their happiness at the occasion when their Lord Vishnu, who has assumed the form of a human being as Lord Ram to fulfill their wish to come down to earth and kill their tormentor Ravana, the king of demons, is getting married to goddess Laxmi, the eternal consort of the Lord, who has manifested herself as Sita.

Refer note to Doha no. 245 above.]

दो०. जानि सुअवसरु सीय तब पठई जनक बोलाइ ।
चतुर सखीं सुंदर सकल सादर चलीं लवाइ ॥ २४६ ॥

dōhā.

jāni su'avasaru sīya taba paṭha'ī janaka bōlā'i.
catura sakhīm sundara sakala sādara calīm lavā'i. 246.

Finding that the time was appropriate, Janak sent a message to call Sita to the venue. Sita's friends or companions who were wise and accomplished as well as wonderful to look at escorted her gracefully to the venue. (Doha no. 246)

[Note—The companions of Sita have invariably been depicted as being clever, wise and intelligent as they were mature enough to guide her and give her moral support during this crucial phase of her life. These companions knew how to deal with sticky situations should they arise, and how to guard Sita from any pitfalls in which she might fall or errors she might commit due to nervousness or mere ignorance and lack of experience.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 228 when Sita was brought to the temple of Parvati in the royal garden to offer prayers; and (ii) Doha no. 263 when Sita was escorted by clever companions to the spot where Lord Ram stood after breaking the bow to help Sita put the victory garland around the neck of the Lord. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 6. (c) Janaki Mangal, Chanda 10 and verse nos. 81-82.]

चौ०. सिय सोभा नहिं जाइ बखानी । जगदंबिका रूप गुन खानी ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

siya sōbhā nahīm jā'i bakhānī. jagadambikā rūpa guna khānī. 1.

[Tulsidas says—] The lovely sight of Sita was so fabulous and enthralling that it cannot be described in words. She was none other than 'Jagdambika', the Mother of the world, and a living embodiment of beauty and charm as well as all the good virtues and manners that exist. (1)

[Note—Refer: (i) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 15; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 246 and its accompanying note.

Remember: It is against decency and proper conduct to describe in graphic detail the physical beauty and features of a woman, and if she is a young girl just about to be married and deemed to be a goddess in a personified form than this restriction is all the more important to observe. This is clearly stated by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103 where it is said about Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati “Shambhu (Shiva) and Bhavaani (Parvati) are the Father and Mother of this creation (world, universe); I will not say anything (i.e. keep silent) about their physical beauty and attractiveness or the way they dressed and behaved to charm each other”.

But this strict restriction applies only to the physical description of females and not so much to males subject to the condition that certain basic principles of etiquette and decency are maintained. This is the reason why Tulsidas has described the physical beauty of the images of Lord Ram and Laxman as they entered the venue of the bow ceremony in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244.

So Tulsidas suffices by saying that “Sita’s beauty was so great that it is not possible to describe it”. A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100 in the context of goddess Parvati where it is said “the beauty of the Mother of the world was so immense that even with countless bodies (persons) attempting to describe it simultaneously, it would not be possible to do so”.]

उपमा सकल मोहि लघु लागीं । प्राकृत नारि अंग अनुरागीं ॥ २ ॥

सिय बरनिअ तेइ उपमा देई । कुकबि कहाइ अजसु को लेई ॥ ३ ॥

upamā sakala mōhi laghu lāgīm. prākṛta nāri aṅga anurāgīm. 2.
siya barani'a tē'i upamā dē'i. kukabi kahā'i ajasu kō lē'i. 3.

All metaphors and comparisons (that can be employed to describe Sita’s divine and sublime beauty) look inapt or unfit to me (and if I dare to do it then it would undermine the dignity and honour of the Mother of the world, and would be tantamount to committing a moral sin).

All such worldly comparisons and metaphors may apply to and suit women of the mortal world (but surely not to Jagdambika, the Mother Goddess of the world). (2)

Say therefore, who will take this grave risk of attempting to employ metaphors and similes to describe Sita’s beauty and charm indirectly, and acquiring the ignominy and infamy of being an incompetent poet (narrator of events)? (3)

[Note—These two verses answer the possible query that may rise in the mind of the reader that though it’s alright not to directly describe the physical features of a lady, but indirect means such as metaphors and comparisons can be employed to give an idea of how wonderful she looked.

So, Tulsidas answers it: nothing that is known or even imagined in one’s dream is as charming, beautiful and magnificent as the image of Sita. So it would be absolutely wrong and utterly incompetent for an honest narrator to cite similes and metaphors that do not fit in perfectly, or at least close enough with the actual scene.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238 where even Lord Ram has surmised that it would be incorrect and wrong to

compare the beauty of Sita's face with the moon which is normally and universally used by even established poets as a metaphor for beauty, charm and loveliness.

In the following verses Tulsidas explains why he has himself desisted from describing Sita's beauty and charm by using comparison with other known entities.]

जौं पटतरिअ तीय सम सीया । जग असि जुबति कहाँ कमनीया ॥ ४ ॥

jauriṁ paṭatari'a tīya sama sīyā. jaga asi jubati kahām' kamanīyā. 4.

If I compare Sita with other women of this mortal world (overlooking for a moment the fact that she is no one else but the Mother of the world known as 'Jagdambika'), then say, where is a woman who is as beguilingly beautiful, charming and lovely as Sita in this world? [Hence, it would be a wrong comparison, and I don't want to invite ridicule by doing it.] (4)

गिरा मुखर तन अरध भवानी । रति अति दुखित अतनु पति जानी ॥ ५ ॥

girā mukhara tana aradha bhavānī. rati ati dukhita atanu pati jānī. 5.

Goddess Saraswati speaks too much (as she is the patron goddess of speech and knowledge which needs someone to speak to spread this knowledge). [Comparing Sita with Saraswati would be wrong because Sita keeps quiet most of the time as opposed to Saraswati who is very talkative.]¹

Bhavaani (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) is also not an appropriate comparison as she has only a half-body. [Lord Shiva is depicted in the Purans as being an "Ardha-Narishwar" or half male and half female. In this dual form of the Lord, the right side of the body is that of a male symbolizing Lord Shiva, and the left side is like a female and it represents goddess Parvati.]²

Rati (the wife of Kamdeo or cupid) remains perpetually in grief as her husband has lost his physical body ("Atanu") (and had to live in an invisible form as the emotions of love, desires and passions that have their seats in a living being's heart). [Thus, Rati is deprived of the pleasure and comfort that a married woman gets by in the physical company of her beloved husband.]³ (5)

[Note—After declaring that it is not possible to compare Sita with any female of the mortal world, Tulsidas now cites some well-known goddesses in the heaven and then concludes that none of them is a proper comparison for Sita because of their shortcomings.

¹Goddess Saraswati is the obvious first choice as she is the wisest amongst the gods and the goddesses in heaven. But she has a drawback: being the patron goddess of speech and knowledge she has to speak continuously in myriad languages and uncountable dialects. In this world, someone or the other is always speaking round the clock, and this is attributed to Saraswati because it is she that enables any living being to utter any sound or word.

Though she is the presiding deity for knowledge and wisdom which requires the spoken word to be spread in the world at large and made known to others, but being the goddess of speech she is equally responsible for good words that are spoken as well as for

evil and uncouth words, polite words as well as boasts, and so on. So, she is corrupted and not free from taints.

On the contrary, Sita speaks little, politely and softly. She never uses cuss words and never swears or shouts at anyone angrily. Therefore this comparison would be absolutely wrong.

²Parvati and Shiva have been depicted together as “Ardha-Narishwar”, meaning the Lord whose form consists of half male and half female. Metaphysically this refers to the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being who is deemed the primary Male, and his Shakti, his dynamic cosmic powers that is deemed the primary Female. They are inseparable from one another; one is incomplete without the other. In order to create, Brahm needed his Shakti, his dynamic powers to create, and hence these two aspects of creation—the Creator and his powers to create that are integral to him—are depicted iconographically in the form of the “Ardha-Narishwar”.

In Hinduism, a wife occupies the left side of her husband. Hence, Parvati is the ‘left half’ of Lord Shiva—meaning that: (i) if one were to worship either of them then the other half is deemed included in this worship; (ii) one must not distinguish between Shiva representing Brahm, and Parvati representing Shakti of Brahm; and that (iii) Brahm without his Shakti and vice versa are as meaningless as a body that is sawn from the middle into two halves.

Now, an interesting question arises—when did they separate? Well, when Brahm decided to actually start the process of creation, he had to use his Shakti that was an inseparable and integral part of his own ‘self’. So Brahm conceived of Maya or delusions that would give the impression that Brahm and his creation are separate entities as he wanted to make the forthcoming creation self-sustaining after the initial phase of creation. This means that the world should be given powers to keep itself replicating and moving forward on its own with the thought that ‘it can do this and that on its own’. Hence, ‘Brahm used his power of creating delusions, or ‘Maya’, to give the impression that ‘Shakti’, which is otherwise Brahm’s integral part, is separate from him. It is this ‘Shakti’ of Brahm that acts as the hidden dynamo that powers the world and keeps it rolling perpetually.

So we see clearly that at the point of time in the distant past when the process of creation was first initiated by the Supreme Being, this Shakti appeared to separate itself from Brahm under the influence of Brahm’s own Maya.

Coming to our present context of the mortal world, it is incongruous and ridiculous to even imagine of a person who is half male and half female. Even the gods and goddesses in the developed heaven do not have such an odd and irregular body. Though goddess Parvati as we know her and whose form is worshipped in temples has an independent body, but primarily in her ancient and original form she had a ‘half body’, the other being that of Shiva. But this form is not meant for the viewers of the mortal world who see Lord Shiva and Parvati as separate divine Beings. Sita lives in this world, but her primary form is that of Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. Laxmi is depicted in the Purans as having a well-built and attractive form as she is the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Therefore, no comparison can be made between Sita whose primary form is goddess Laxmi, and Parvati whose primary form is the left half of Ardha-Narishwar.

³The story of how Kamdeo (cupid) lost his physical body, and on the plea of his wife Rati was converted into an invisible form as the emotions of love, passions, desires and lust that lives in the heart of all living beings is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Briefly it is this: Kamdeo was sent by the gods to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva so that he can be married to Parvati and beget a son who would kill the demon Taarakaasur. When Kamdeo managed to break Shiva's meditative trance, the latter opened his third eye located in the center of his forehead. Fire spewed out from it, and in his anger Shiva burnt Kamdeo to ashes for disturbing him. Rati, the wife of Kamdeo, was crestfallen, dismayed and aggrieved as Kamdeo had no personal animosity with Shiva due to which he would disturb the latter, but had done so at the request of the gods. So the punishment of burning him to ashes was misplaced and miscarriage of justice. So she came lamenting and grieving to Shiva and pleaded with the Lord to restore her husband. The merciful Shiva's anger meanwhile vanished, and he realized that Kamdeo was actually not at fault. So the Lord blessed Rati that henceforth her husband will become eternal in the sense that he will live perpetually in the heart of all living beings of this creation, and that included not only the mortal creatures but the gods too, in a subtle form in their hearts as 'Kaam' or the virtue of desire, love, passion and wants.

Rati wasn't satisfied. She wished to have the company of her husband in physical form. So Shiva blessed her that in the next era of the celestial cycle, known as the 'Dwapar Yuga', her husband would become the son of Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu that followed that of Lord Ram who was on earth in the previous era known as Treta Yuga, and then she would be married to him to regain her husband once again in physical form.

But our story relates to the 'Treta Yuga', because the 'Dwapar Yuga' was far away in the future. Therefore, at the present point of time Rati was suffering from the agony of separation from her husband Kamdeo (cupid). This is the story that is being referred to in this comparison of Rati with Sita. Sita's husband would have a physical form and live in her close proximity during her life, but Rati has lost physical contact with her husband Kamdeo who lives in an invisible form in the heart as the emotions collectively known as 'Kaam'.

Hence, this comparison is also not apt.]

बिष बारुनी बंधु प्रिय जेही । कहिअ रमासम किमि बैदेही ॥ ६ ॥

biṣa bārūnī bandhu priya jēhī. kahi'a ramāsama kimi baidēhī. 6.

How can one dare to compare Vaidehi (Sita) with Rama (goddess Laxmi) who loves to have 'Visha' (poison) and 'Baaruni' (wine; an intoxicating drink) as her brothers. (6)

[Note—Rama is another name for goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and material prosperity. Though she has all other good virtues but there is a problem with her—and it is that she has to siblings who are her brothers, and like any sister she loves them. These two brothers are 'poison' and 'wine or any sort of intoxicating drink'. How did this happen?

The story goes that when the gods and the demons had churned the celestial ocean in search of Amrit (nectar of eternity and bliss), many things were produced besides Amrit. The worst thing that was produced was an exceptionally corrosive liquid known as the 'Halaal' which was the strongest poison known.

'Baaruni', literally the liquid that is like water but is extremely intoxicating like distilled spirit (liquor), was another thing that was produced during the churning.

Amongst the other products that were 'Dhanwantari', the medicine man of the gods, the 'Kaamdhenu' cow, a horse, the conch known as 'Shankha', the elephant known as the 'Gaja', the gem known as the 'Mani', the evergreen tree that gives anything desired and known as the 'Kalpataru', the celestial voluptuous nymph named 'Rambhaa' who was

personified beauty and aroused lust by her mere presence, 'Rama' who had the pot of gold and a lotus in her hand who would be the future patron deity of wealth and prosperity, and 'Amrit', the elixir of eternity and bliss.

Rama's association with all, except Amrit, by the virtue of their birth from the same source and at the same time made her tainted in some way or the other. For instance, to have a killer drink known as Halaal poison is not something laudable, as is to be closely related to something that is intoxicating such as Baaruni. These were the worst produce of the ocean, and hence Tulsidas has cited only these two. But if we go a little further we find that none of the siblings of Rama are worthy of praise. Let us see how.

Dhanwantari is the medicine man, and a person needs a doctor only when he is sick. That means, this medicine man brings with him sickness and disease that he will need to cure.

Kaamdheni and Kalpataru oblige all who make a wish, and not all those who make a wish ask for spiritual rewards. Hence, they oblige even those who may be sinful or have sinful intentions. Hence they are also tainted.

The horse never stays calm; it is always moving and fidgety. This means that a person who is compared with a horse is fickle minded and unsteady; he would run as fast as the wind but only to serve others and does not decide his destiny out of his own wisdom.

The conch (Shankha) is hollow inside but makes a lot of loud noise—i.e. it has no substance but is boastful and loud-mouthed.

The elephant (Gaja) is arrogant and reckless, and has an ugly body with a nose that appears to be a fifth leg, eyes disproportionately small as compared to its large rounded head, and teeth that protrude out of its mouth like horns. It tramples underfoot the lower forms of life such as small creatures and plants; it even uproots huge trees for no fault of theirs.

The Mani (gem) creates a lot of fear of robbers and worry over its security. More often than not it leads to animosity and jealousy. It usually is acquired by wrongful means. Hence, its inherent character is impure.

And the Rambha creates a lot of heartburn for those who cannot have access to her, and may lead to a lot of hatred, jealousy and even strife. She arouses lust and sensuality which cannot be regarded as honourable emotions.

Therefore, none of the so-called siblings of Rama (Laxmi) can be said to be above board, and hence they do not suit for any comparison with Sita.

A very interesting point is to be noted here. Tulsidas has cited women from all the three levels of the existing world—the terrestrial world (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 247), the heavenly world (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 247), and the subterranean world (the present Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 247)—to essentially assert that Sita is unique and unmatched; she cannot be and should not be compared with any other female.

The heavenly world is represented by goddess Saraswati, Parvati and Rati, the terrestrial world by ordinary women who live on earth, and the underworld by Rama as she was produced from the bottom of the salty ocean during the latter's churning by the gods and demons using the body of the legendary snake known as Shesha as the rope, and Mt. Mandarachal as the churning rod.]

जौं छबि सुधा पयोनिधि होई । परम रूपमय कच्छपु सोई ॥ ७ ॥

सोभा रजु मंदरु सिंगारु । मथै पानि पंकज निज मारु ॥ ८ ॥

jaurṁ chabi sudhā payōnidhi hōṭī. parama rūpamaya kacchapu sōṭī. 7.
sōbhā raju mandaru siṅgārū. mathai pāni paṅkaja nija mārū. 8.

[After having said that ‘Rama’ or Laxmi who was produced by churning the sour ocean is not an apt comparison with Sita, Tulsidas now goes on to say which ‘Rama’ would be more suitable for this comparison.

Verse nos. 7-8 and Doha no. 247 that follow them are to be read together to make sense of what is being said here.]

Supposing there is an ocean of nectar in which the virtues of beauty and magnificence are dissolved (instead of salt and other corroding elements in the ocean that was churned by the gods and the demons to produce Rama earlier), and in it is present a tortoise who is a living embodiment of magnificent beauty and charm (instead of the ugly tortoise that supported the Mandrachal from sinking into the nether world in the earlier case when the ocean was churned by the gods and demons). (7)

The rope used to churn this ocean is made of the virtues of attractiveness, charm, splendour and radiance, and the churning rod itself is the sentiments of love and glamour condensed in the form of a mountain representing Mt. Mandrachal. The churning in this case is done by Kamdeo (cupid), the patron deity of love, beauty and charm who is the most attractive and bewitching god in this creation (instead of the inferior gods and the ugly demons earlier). (8)

दो०. एहि बिधि उपजै लच्छि जब सुंदरता सुख मूल ।
तदपि सकोच समेत कबि कहहिं सीय समतूल ॥ २४७ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi upajai lacchi jaba sundaratā sukha mūla.
tadapi sakōca samēta kabi kahahim sīya samatūla. 247.

[This Doha is in continuation of Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above.] On this wise, even if the best of the virtues of beauty, comeliness, magnificence, glamour and charm (sundaratā), as well as the best of roots of all happiness, joy and cheerfulness (sukha mūla) emerge (upajai) and collect themselves at one place to show themselves to the beholder (lacchi jaba), a wise and erudite poet would still hesitate to compare them with (tadapi sakōca samēta kabi kahahim) similar virtues of Sita because the former are no match for the gladness and joy that one gets by beholding the beauty and charm as well as learning of the immensity of the glory and majesty of Sita (sīya samatūla) (Doha no. 247).

[Note—In Chaupai nos. 1-8 that precede this Doha, Tulsidas is describing the beauty and charm of Sita. He essentially says that Sita’s comeliness and loveliness, her charm and magnificence, her dignity and glory are beyond compare. Even if all the goodness and majesties of the world are collected and a learned poet is asked to judge them vis-à-vis Sita’s virtues, he will unequivocally declare that there is no comparison. Only things that

have some semblance of similarity should be compared, but the difference between Sita's virtues and other worldly virtues are like the difference between the earth and the sky.

The poet here is Tulsidas himself. So he says in essence that "I (Tulsidas) would hesitate to compare Sita with even goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of all worldly charms and joys. I doubt if goddess Laxmi would even come near to any criterion that one would apply in comparing her with Sita. Laxmi isn't qualified enough to be remotely comparable with Sita."

These lines clear any sort of misgivings that may arise when Rama is deemed to be imperfect and therefore an unfit comparison for Sita as described in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 247 above.

Tulsidas asserts that even if Rama had all the best of virtues and the best of origin, he would not like to compare Sita with her. Why so? Well, the answer is found in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 246, and in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 247 both of which declare that "Sita is none else but Jagdambika, the Mother of the world, the Mother Goddess". And therefore she is incomparable to any goddess or any other female who are all junior to her.

Besides this, it will be highly inappropriate to narrate the physical beauty of one's mother, and if she happens to be the 'mother of the entire world', it will be the gravest sin one can ever commit. So, Tulsidas asserts that he won't dare describe Sita, even indirectly by means of comparison with any known entity.]

चौ०. चलीं संग लै सखीं सयानी । गावत गीत मनोहर बानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

calīm saṅga lai sakhīm sayānī. gāvata gīta manōhara bānī. 1.

Clever friends escorted Sita to the arena (of the bow breaking ceremony). All the while they sang melodious songs befitting the occasion in sweet voices. (1)

[Note—When Sita had earlier gone to the royal garden to offer her prayers at the temple of goddess Parvati, she was in the lead and walked confidently in the front of the group of her friends because at that time the girls were alone and there were no gazing eyes looking at them, but now she is feeling very shy and bashful as thousands of eyes are riveted on her. Besides this, the earlier occasion was an informal one and she was dressed in a causal manner, but now the situation was different. Now was a formal occasion, and she was heavily bejeweled and attired in glamorous clothes that were thickly embroidered with gems and pearls as well as threads of precious metals such as gold and silver.

Therefore, in the earlier case when Sita had gone to the garden to offer prayers it is said that "the clever friends of hers sang songs as they accompanied her (Sita) to the garden", i.e. the friends had followed Sita from behind and sideways in an informal way like a group of friends going to a garden, talking amongst themselves and singing songs that were more like prayers instead of songs sung during marriage. They had no tension on their minds, and they were alone with no one paying any attention to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 228.

But now it was a very different condition altogether. Thousands of people were watching each step she took, and so it was natural for her to become nervous and fidgety. She was formally adorned with heavy ornaments and clothes, and had to be exceptionally

careful with every step she took in order to maintain decorum, dignity and solemnity of the occasion. Even an ordinary bride is escorted by her friends when she walks down the aisle upto the altar to take her marriage vows. In this case the would-be bride, Sita, was a princess, and therefore it is natural that she would be honourably escorted to the designated place with the greatest of care, decorum and dignity. Sita had her eyes low, and she walked slowly. She was surrounded by her friends who guided her along.

In the garden Sita could look wherever she wished, she was free and informal, but now she had to keep her eyes low and not look beyond, say, a few feet ahead.

Sita's group of escorts was surely selected carefully by her mother, the queen. These girls were expert in such matters. They knew how to walk with dignity and respect, how to sing melodious songs, and how to tackle emergency or some tricky situation should they arise, such as Sita inadvertently tripping over or slipping due to some unforeseen reason, or she becoming exhausted and wishing to drink some water or take rest while the competition for breaking the bow was underway, or giving her protection should some sort of fight amongst the kings erupted during the ceremony. There were many unforeseen things that had to be handled, and so Sita's companions had to be intelligent and wise—or 'clever'—so that they can take proper decisions and act most prudently on their own.]

सोह नवल तनु सुंदर सारी । जगत जननि अतुलित छबि भारी ॥ २ ॥

भूषण सकल सुदेस सुहाए । अंग अंग रचि सखिन्ह बनाए ॥ ३ ॥

sōha navala tanu sundara sārī. jagata janani atulita chabi bhārī. 2.
bhūṣana sakala sudēsa suhā'ē. aṅga aṅga raci sakhinha banā'ē. 3.

A beautiful Sari (a long piece of coloured and decorated cloth that is wrapped around so as to cover the whole body of a woman) adorned Sita's youthful body. The Mother of the world looked most glamorous and presented a sight that was most fabulous and incomparable with anything in this world. (2)

Her friends had decorated every part of her body (such as the head, the ears, the nose, the forehead, the hairs, the neck, the hands, the waist, the legs, the feet etc.) very carefully and most diligently with suitable ornaments befitting that particular part. [For instance, ear-rings for the ear, a tiara for the head, a hair-pin and flowers for the hairs, a nose-ring for the nose, a necklace or garland for the neck, bracelets, armbands and finger-rings for the hands, waist-band for the waist, anklets and toe-rings for the feet, and so on.]

(3)

[Note—Great care has been taken by the author, Goswami Tulsidas, while describing the decorations or beauty of the body of Sita.

Remember: He has always treated Sita as the Mother of the world and a divine goddess, and so he is always careful in using words while describing her, in any context whatsoever, that can never be regarded as being vulgar, indecent or undignified.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 11 Ka. Here the occasion is Lord Ram's return to his capital Ayodhya from exile and victory at Lanka. On this occasion, the mothers of Lord Ram had got Sita bathed and decorated with ornaments and royal robes. It is said here that "the mothers-in-law respectfully got Sita to take a bath to clean herself, and then decorated every part of her body with wonderful ornaments and royal robes".]

रंगभूमि जब सिय पगु धारी । देखि रूप मोहे नर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

raṅgabhūmi jaba siya pagu dhārī. dēkhi rūpa mōhē nara nārī. 4.

When Sita set her foot on the ground of the arena, all the men and women who saw her beauty became bewitched and enthralled by it. (4)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 6.

This line sums up the fascinating and enchanting sight of Sita's beauty as hinted in Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above. Sita presented such a marvelous sight of exceptional beauty that all those who saw her in the arena were bewitched by it. She captivated everyone's mind and heart by her beauty and majesty. In that arena, she was the center of all attention and attraction. This is the reason why she had felt shy and bashful as observed in a note of Chaupai line no. 1 above.

An interesting point is to be made here. When Lord Shiva got married to goddess Parvati, it has been said that "the assembled 'gods' were enthralled by the couple's majestic beauty and charm"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 100. But now it is said that 'the men and women' were enthralled when they saw Sita's magnificent beauty. Well, the reason is that Shiva's marriage was attended by gods, and Sita's marriage is attended by human beings, such as the citizens of Janakpur. The gods are present here also, but they have stationed themselves in the heaven from where they shower flowers and play their musical instruments to express their joy—see the next verse no. 5 below.]

हरषि सुरन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई । बरषि प्रसून अपछरा गाई ॥ ५ ॥

haraṣi suranha dundubhīm bajā'īm. baraṣi prasūna apacharā gā'īm. 5.

In the heavens, the gods felt exhilarated; they sounded their musical instruments such as the kettle-drums and showered flowers (upon Sita), while the Apsaras (celestial nymphs) sang songs befitting the occasion. (5)

[Note—As we have seen earlier, the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram and there was merry singing in the heaven when he had arrived and took his seat at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 246.

Now, the gods have once again showered flowers when Sita arrived. This was a clear sign that the gods showed their happiness and pleasure when Lord Ram and Sita arrived at the venue. This was also a clear sign that they were the favourites of the gods, and this meant that they were to be soon married because the very purpose of this gathering was to find a proper groom for Sita.]

पानि सरोज सोह जयमाला । अवचट चितए सकल भुआला ॥ ६ ॥

pāni sarōja sōha jayamālā. avacaṭa cita'ē sakala bhu'ālā. 6.

Sita held a victory garland in her lotus-like hands¹. As soon as she stepped into the ground of the arena with this garland, she cast a quick passing glance at all the kings and princes present there². (6)

[Note—¹The garland that Sita held was not an ordinary victory garland but one that stood for victory over the world. This is because it would be put around the neck of anyone who broke the bow that was not an ordinary bow, but belonged to Lord Shiva, and was the one with which the Lord had slayed the invincible demon Tripura and had burnt the three formidably well-protected cities over which he ruled. Therefore it implied that only someone who is stronger than or at least equal to Shiva would be able to lift it and break it. And this is not a joke or a child's play.

Hence, breaking this formidable bow of Lord Shiva would clearly and indisputably establish the person who breaks it as the greatest warrior of all times, not only in the terrestrial world but also in the heaven and the nether world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 264.

Here it is not mentioned what sort of a garland it was—whether of gold or silver threads and having pearls and other precious gems as beads, or one that was made of flowers, and if the latter is the case then what flowers were used in it. But usually in such cases the lotus flower is used as it is considered the purest of all the flowers and is used to as an offering to deities.

In the book “Janki Mangal” of Tulsidas which deals exclusively with the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. In its verse no. 109 it is explicitly stated that the garland that Sita put around the neck of Lord Ram was made of ‘lotus flowers’.

However, in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Sarga no. 6, verse no. 29 it is said that the garland was made of gold. It is also mentioned in this verse that the complexion of Sita was like that of gold.

In Srimad Bhagwat Puran, Skandha (chapter) 8, Canto (section) 8, verse no. 24, a garland of white lotus flowers is mentioned in the hands of Laxmi, the goddess of prosperity and material wealth, when she emerged from the Kshirsagar (the celestial ocean) when it was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life and blissfulness. She would subsequently put this garland around the neck of Lord Vishnu to marry her. Since Sita is an incarnation of Laxmi, and she is to soon marry Lord Ram who is a human form of Lord Vishnu, we can certainly guess with confidence that this ‘victory garland’ was made of lotus flowers.

A similar idea is expressed in the book “Geetawali” of Tulsidas. In its Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4 it says that “the victory garland put around the neck of Lord Ram by Sita looked so wonderful and fabulous as if a row of swans (who are white in colour), who have flown out of the lake known as Mansarovar, have alighted and comfortably settled down on a Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant, referring the dark-complexioned body of Lord Ram)”. It is very clear in this metaphor that the garland was made of white lotus flowers because its flowers are likened to the bird ‘swan’ which is white in colour, and the flower that grows in the Mansarovar lake is ‘white lotus’. The ‘row of swans’ is the chain of lotus flowers that have been threaded together to form the victory garland.

²This was natural and instinctive behaviour for Sita. When she came into the arena, she raised her eyes and quickly looked around. This was the first chance she had got to see the venue, and out of general curiosity she looked around to see the huge assembly that was extremely fascinating.

Everyone had waited eagerly with baited breath for her arrival, and there must have been pin-drop silence at the venue. There was an atmosphere of tense uncertainty and expectation all around—no one knew what would happen that day. Sita was all the more worried and anxious because her entire future life hinged on the events of the next few hours. Internally in her mind and heart though she had surrendered herself to Lord Ram, but that was something personal and secret.

She was already nervous about her future, and when she stepped in the arena she could feel the stiffness of the atmosphere and the hushed tension that prevailed everywhere. She could feel that all eyes were hawkishly looking at her, and it was a very natural and instinctive reaction on her part to raise her eyes and have a quick look around.

Though she had mentally decided that if she was to marry someone then he has to be Lord Ram, and goddess Parvati had already blessed her that it would be so when she had prayed to the goddess in the garden temple (refer—Baal Kand, Chand line nos. 1-2 and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 236 above), yet she instinctively glanced at all the kings and princes who had come to try their luck at marrying her to get an idea of what sort of people they were, the first impression that her mind and heart makes of them, and to see if they fitted in her imagination of who should be her future husband by any remote chance should her dreams of marrying Lord Ram crumble to pieces.

Her condition at that time was almost like a person who has been put on the block for auction, and this person nervously, anxiously, eagerly, but disgustingly, looks around with annoyance to have a quick look at the people who are examining the object of auction for which they have to bid with penetrating eyes, and getting ready to be the first one to grab the auctioned object!

As has been noted above, she had no real desire to see the kings and princes who had gathered there to make a quick assessment of who would suit her as she had already chosen Lord Ram as her groom at the emotional level. So obviously this glance around the arena was in a general sort of way, just to see things in a general way out of curiosity and fascination.

Another reason for Sita looking around is made clear in the next verse nos. 7-8 that follow below. We will observe that the real reason for Sita looking around was to see if Lord Ram is present in the assembly or not, but the deluded kings and princes thought that she was looking at them even if her glance fell on them for a fleeting moment as it moved quickly from one person to another in search of Lord Ram.

We can imagine the pain and anxiety that dominated not only Sita's nervous heart but also of all the citizens of Janakpur who had assembled there to witness the ceremony.]

सीय चकित चित रामहि चाहा । भए मोहबस सब नरनाहा ॥ ७ ॥

मुनि समीप देखे दोउ भाई । लगे ललकि लोचन निधि पाई ॥ ८ ॥

siya cakita cita rāmaḥi cāhā. bha'e mōhabasa saba naranāhā. 7.
muni samīpa dēkhē dō'u bhā'ī. lagē lalaki lōcana nidhi pā'ī. 8.

Sita wanted to see Lord Ram, and so her eager glances were searching for the Lord in the assembly. Therefore, she looked everywhere in the direction where all the competing kings and princes were seated (to see where Lord Ram was amongst them). But the deluded kings and princes ('Narnaahaa') were caught in an illusion, thinking that she was looking at them (or for them), and this created a fantasy in their minds that Sita was fascinated with them if her eyes fell on them even for a fraction of a second.¹ (7)

When Sita saw that the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) were seated near the sage (Vishwamitra), she fixed her eyes on them and gazed at them with eagerness as if her eyes had found the treasure they were searching for.² (8)

[Note—¹Refer note appended to verse no. 6 above.

Sita had already heard that the two brothers have come with sage Vishwamitra to attend the marriage ceremony. So she was certain that they must be seated somewhere, but was not sure where. She could not ask her friends to point them out for her as it would be very indecent and improper. So she decided to look for them herself. Her roving eyes moved quickly around the circular arena, seeing each king or prince if he was her beloved, Lord Ram. She had seen Lord Ram and Laxman in the garden previously, and so would have no difficulty in recognizing them. But the pervert kings who were eyeing her greedily were so overcome with passions that even if her eyes fell on them for a fraction of a second to see whether a particular was not either of the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), the concerned king thought that she was searching for him, and had taken a liking for him.

Finally, Sita saw that the two brothers were seated alongside the sage on a specially erected seat. As soon as she saw the two brothers she stopped looking anywhere, so the kings and princes upon whom she had not yet cast her glance became jealous with those who were the fortunate ones whom Sita had quickly seen a while ago. The latter category of kings became excited and this aroused animosity with the kings sitting on the other side. The former group of kings thought that Sita had stopped looking elsewhere because she has selected one of them, and that is why she did not bother to look at others. They became enthusiastic and were literally jumping with joy, while the other group sitting on the other side felt neglected and became angry.

This mutual jealousy and the delusion of acceptance or rejection was so profound that when finally Lord Ram had broken the bow and the victory garland was put around his neck by Sita and she stood calmly before the Lord with lowered eyes, the entire assembly of defeated kings and princes—except of course the ‘good ones’ who had sat quietly and had not participated in the bow-breaking competition—stood up in revolt, and there was all likelihood of an all-out war. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 267.

²As soon as Sita saw the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, she became happy as if her eyes had found what they were searching for. She could immediately recognize her beloved Lord. A similar idea is expressed earlier when Sita saw them in the royal garden where she had gone to offer worship to goddess Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 232. But upon close examination we find a fine difference in the two instances of Sita seeing Lord Ram. In the garden where she first saw the Lord it is said that she ‘recognised’ him, and in this current verse it is said that she ‘found’ him.

Well, it’s easy to understand this difference. We must remember that Lord Ram and Sita are respective human forms of Lord Vishnu and his divine consort goddess Laxmi. Ever since Lord Vishnu had to come down to earth as a human being in the body of Lord Ram (for a number of reasons, one of them being to keep his promise made to the gods and mother earth that he would become a human to kill the demons who were tormenting them), he was separated from Laxmi who took birth as Sita. So, as soon as Sita saw the Lord she immediately ‘recognised’ that the prince standing before her eyes was no one else but Lord Vishnu. In this case all she had to do was to decide whether or not this prince was her eternal Lord, Vishnu. And she at once ‘recognized’ him, that he indeed was Vishnu. And that settled the question once and for all.

In the garden, Lord Ram and Laxman were alone, but in the marriage arena however, the situation was different as there were thousands of kings and princes of all demoniations, and all of them were in their finest of royal garbs, robes, ornaments, crowns and other paraphernalia. So Sita (Laxmi) had to search for her beloved Lord, Sri Ram (Vishnu) in this crowd. That is why she rapidly moved her eyes from king to king. And soon she ‘found’ him in this crowded arena, sitting alongside sage Vishwamitra with his brother Laxman.

Let us take a simple example to understand this. Suppose a husband is separated from his wife in the melee of an overcrowded marketplace. The wife is wise and she maintains her poise, approaches the police station and gives a brief description of her husband’s features. The police make an announcement that any person who fits this description should report to them. As soon as the husband arrives and the couple stands fact to face, the police ask her to ‘recognise’ who this gentleman is. It is obvious that both of them, the wife and the husband, would ‘recognise’ each other. Any other person who may resemble the description of the lost husband and turns up at the police station on the basis of the announcement would naturally be turned away by the wife as she knows who her husband really is, and can easily recognize that this person is not him. This is what happened in the garden. Laxmi, in her human form as Sita, could immediately ‘recognise’ her Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram as soon as she saw him.

Now suppose the wife and husband once again get separated, and instead of going to the police station the wife searches for him in the crowd. She will look in all directions, at every male face, and suddenly she sees that her beloved husband is standing in the corner of a shop with his friend, waiting for her. We say she ‘found’ him in the crowd. Here, she has not so much recognized her husband as being able to ‘find’ him in the crowd. In the police station however, she had to ‘recognise’ him. Perhaps all men of roughly the same description who turned up at the police station after the announcement are lined up, and the wife is asked to ‘recognise’ who among them is her husband.

This is the difference between the two instances when Sita had seen Lord Ram.]

दो०. गुरजन लाज समाजु बड़ देखि सीय सकुचानि ।
लागि बिलोकन सखिन्ह तन रघुबीरहि उर आनि ॥ २४८ ॥

dōhā.

gurajana lāja samāju baṛa dēkhi sīya sakucāni.
lāgi bilōkana sakhinha tana raghubīrahi ura āni. 248.

Sita felt shy and bashful (as she gazed at Lord Ram) because of the presence of elders of the community there, as well as due to the huge crowd whose attention was fixed on every move of hers.

So she calmly brought the image of Lord Ram into her heart (i.e. she enshrined the Lord quietly in her heart, fixing her mind not on the physical form sitting in the arena but on the subtle form that was enthroned inside her heart), turned her eyes away from him, and instead, started looking at her companions (i.e. friends) who were accompanying her. (Doha no. 248)

[Note—A similar thing had happened in the garden where Sita had gone to offer prayers to goddess Parvati earlier. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 232, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234.

But there is situational difference between Sita seeing Lord Ram in the garden and her looking at him here in the arena. Sita realized in the arena that it is not good and decent for her reputation to look intently at a stranger-prince in a crowded assembly where her entire family, all the elders of the city as well as all the invited guests were present, and all of them had their eyes fixed on her, watching every move and gesture she made. Her looking fixedly at one place or at one individual would ignite a scandal, and give a bad name to her and her family. People would start gossiping that Sita has a loose character.

So prudently she turned her gaze away from Lord Ram, and pretended that she had not seen and recognized him at all, and that, if questioned, she can always say that she had seen in the direction of where Lord Ram was sitting in a causal manner just as she was glancing through the crowd of assembled kings and princes without any particular reason.

The situation in the garden was different. There she was alone with her close friends with whom she could share her internal and private feelings, unlike the situation in the arena which is crowded with eager onlookers scrutinizing each gesture and movement of hers. Some of these spectators are bound to be over-jealous who would jump to scandalous assumptions at the slightest excuse, at the drop of a hat so to say, to spread false gossip about her. So here she had to be extra cautious. In the garden she had been able to spend quite a bit of time looking at the two brothers, and even when she was forced to go away to finish her worship rituals as it was getting late, she managed to look back over her shoulders repeatedly on the excuse of seeing birds, trees and animals so that she can have one more glance of the adorable brothers before they vanished from sight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 234 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.]

चौ०. राम रूपु अरु सिय छबि देखें । नर नारिन्ह परिहरीं निमेषें ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

rāma rūpu aru siya chabi dēkhēm̐. nara nārinha pariharīm̐ nimēṣēm̐. 1.

The assembled men and women at the venue were so enthralled by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram and the fabulous charm of Sita's loveliness that their eyes stopped blinking.

(1)

[Note—When one is stunned by some sight and gazes at it with utter astonishment, the eyes stop blinking as an impulsive and natural reaction to the stupification of the brain.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 which also describes the same scene when the two brothers had entered the arena. It says that the “stunned men and women had their eyes riveted on the Lord and could not move their pupils (i.e. eyes) away from the two brothers even if they had wanted to do so”.

The marvelous charm of Sita and her literally out-of-the-world beauty had not only caught the attention of Lord Ram and Laxman but had captivated the imagination, the

mind and the heart of the Lord so much that he had himself accepted this fact. This was the occasion when they had met in the garden where Sita had gone to offer worship to goddess Parvati. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 230; (ii) Doha no. 231 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235.

A little earlier, the citizens of Janakpur were enchanted by the charming sight of Lord Ram and Laxman when the two had gone sightseeing in the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; and (iii) Doha no. 223.

Remember: The Viraat Purush or the Supreme Being is the Lord who had created everything, including Mother Nature; the latter is another aspect or another half of the Viraat Purush and is therefore an integral part of the cosmic all-embracing form of the Lord. This ‘Mother Nature’ is also known as ‘Prakriti’, and it is astoundingly beautiful. It is so stupendously wonderful, fascinating and charming—and therefore beyond imagination and description by the limited abilities of the human mind—that legions of the greatest of poets and painters ever born on earth who had attempted to depict a fraction of its beauty, had surrendered themselves and had accepted without qualms that what they have presented to the world is just a glimpse of what to expect when one wishes to observe this miraculous creation of the Lord, known as ‘Mother Nature’ or ‘Prakriti’.

Now, it is the same Viraat Purush and Mother Nature, who are also known as Lord Vishnu and Laxmi at the cosmic level of creation, who have manifested themselves as Lord Ram and Sita respectively on earth. The virtues of beauty, magnificence and charm—or anything that is beautiful, magnificent and charming—are an integral part of the divine qualities of Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi at the cosmic level of creation, and therefore there is no wonder that their gross human forms as Lord Ram and Sita respectively are bound to reflect these qualities.

For instance, the sandalwood tree has a natural fragrance that is characteristic of it, and if any toy or pot is made out of its wood then the latter would emit a sweet scent reminiscent of their primary form as the ‘sandalwood tree’. They would not smell like articles made from wood of any other tree, such as the mango or the margosa tree. By merely holding an article made from the sandalwood tree one would immediately know about its origin. Similarly, the glorious and matchless divine virtues of Lord Ram and Sita were sufficient to make wise people realise about their divine origin and heritage as someone who were not ordinary human beings but Lord Vishnu and Laxmi themselves personified in their respective forms as Lord Ram and Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.]

सोचहिं सकल कहत सकुचाहीं । बिधि सन बिनय करहिं मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥

हरु बिधि बेगि जनक जड़ताई । मति हमारि असि देहि सुहाई ॥ ३ ॥

बिनु बिचार पनु तजि नरनाहू । सीय राम कर करै बिबाहू ॥ ४ ॥

sōcahiṁ sakala kahata sakucāhīṁ. bidhi sana binaya karahiṁ mana māhīṁ. 2.
haru bidhi bēgi janaka jaṛatā'ī. mati hamāri asi dēhi suhā'ī. 3.
binu bicāra panu taji naranāhū. sīya rāma kara karai bibāhū. 4.

All of them (men and women) were worried and anxious in their hearts, but were hesitant (reluctant, afraid) to speak out about their feelings openly in public. So they prayed to the creator Brahma earnestly and with a sense of urgency in their hearts—(2)

‘Oh Creator (‘bidhi’)! Please quickly remove the stupidity that has eclipsed the wisdom of king Janak’s mind, and has stymied him, and instead give him right understanding like that of ours. [In other words, oh Creator, inspire Janak to discard his stubbornness and overcome his imaginary fears of bad name by disregarding his vows of marrying Sita to anyone who breaks the bow of Shiva. If he does remain adamant then it is sure he would have to repent and regret for his foolhardiness for the rest of his life. Oh Creator, please somehow influence his mind so that he becomes reasonable and changes course according to the changed situation. At the time he made his vows he hadn’t known of Lord Ram and so was excusable, but now he has no excuse of bartering the entire future of his own daughter just because he wishes to stick to his archaic vows which have become outdated by now. After all, being a father it is his obligatory moral duty to see what makes Sita happy in life, and at the same time he should take into consideration the views of his subjects as well because Sita is as dear to all of us, the subjects of his kingdom, as she is to him. Can’t he read the writing on the wall? We had always thought that our king was a very thoughtful and wise man, but today we feel that he is acting stupidly and most impractically for he is neglecting many important factors and the changed equation that prevails now.] (3)

Inspire him so that he discards his senseless vow without any regrets, and marries Sita with Lord Ram without any apology any feeling of wrong-doing, or making any excuses for changing his decision (because Sita is his daughter, and hence he has the right to secure her future to the best of his ability and intellect). (4)

[Note—The same hope is expressed by the citizens earlier when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to see Janakpur upon their arrival in the city two days back. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

Refer also to (a) “Geetawali” of Tulsidas, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 70; (ii) verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; (iii) verse no. 78, stanza no. 3 which is explicit on this subject; and (b) “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 70 as well as Chanda no. 7.

The citizens were afraid to stand up and propose to king Janak that he should cancel the condition that anyone who breaks the bow would marry Sita, and instead go ahead and straight away marry Sita with Lord Ram. But it is easy said than done, for the king had to take into consideration so many factors before taking any impulsive step. For one, this would leave a permanent scar on his immaculate reputation as a king who never breaks his vow no matter what befalls him, and second there was a certainty of revolt by the assembled kings who would fight till death for being called and then insulted. Even if Janak managed to somehow calm them by reasoning or subdue them by force because it was his realm and he had a huge army at his disposal which the invited kings lacked, the repercussions would be horrendous. As soon as these kings and princes returned to their respective kingdoms, they would all join hands and launch an attack on Janakpur. It will lead to bloodshed and absolute destruction and ruin. No sensible king would ever allow this misery to be perpetrated upon his kingdom and its innocent citizens.

The king himself was in a grave dilemma—had he known about these two princes before making his declaration then he would have offered to marry Sita and all her other sisters directly with the four sons of king Dasrath, i.e. Lord Ram and his three brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, which in fact Janak actually did later on when Lord

Ram broke the bow and his marriage with Sita was sealed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 325.

The above fact that Janak was so enchanted with Lord Ram that if he had the choice he would have certainly married his daughter Sita with the Lord is reiterated elsewhere also—e.g. in (a) “Geetawali”, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 61, stanza nos. 3-4; (ii) verse no. 64-66, and 69 which are very explicit on this aspect; (iii) verse no. 68, stanza no. 5-6, and 9; and in (b) “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 41 and 48, as well as Chanda no. 6.

Another fact is that Janak was extremely enchanted by the two brothers; this is clear when he had first seen them. The occasion was the king’s going to welcome sage Vishwamitra when he had arrived at Janakpur along with Lord Ram and Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.]

जगु भल कहिहि भाव सब काहू । हठ कीन्हें अंतहुँ उर दाहू ॥ ५ ॥

jagu bhala kahihi bhāva saba kāhū. haṭha kīnhēṁ antahūṁ ura dāhū. 5.

The whole world would approve of it (i.e. of Janak deciding to marry Sita with Lord Ram by circumventing the condition of breaking of the bow) because this is what the people want. [There will be no opposition or criticism of this decision of the king.]

On the other hand, being adamant and reluctant to adapt to change situation would only produce internal agony, restlessness and grief in the end.’ (5)

[Note—The citizens discussed the matter of Janak’s reluctance to break his vow that Sita would be married to anyone who broke the bow, and instead deciding to marry Sita with Lord Ram directly. They understood that Janak was afraid of a bad name and ignominy that would come to him for breaking his own vow.

So in this line they say that it is wrong to think this way. A good king is one who keeps in mind the views of his subjects when taking any decision. Now since the whole city is in favour of Sita marrying Lord Ram, king Janak must not feel guilty of breaking his vows. Should the need arise, the entire city was ready to back him and stand by his decision.

Remember: It is a king’s own people, the subjects of his kingdom, who are most affected by any of his actions and decisions, and therefore they are the ones who either praise him or criticise him. No one else outside the kingdom is much interested. Therefore, if the citizens want that Sita should be married to Lord Ram and if it necessitates the king breaking his vows, there should be no problem; the king would be assured of full support from his subjects. If the subjects of a king are happy and contented by his actions and decisions, it bids well for the king himself.

Just the opposite happens if the king takes any decision or action that is not liked by the people. There would be discontent and resistance amongst the masses. In the present case, no one wants that Sita should be married to anyone other than Lord Ram, and if the king goes ahead with his stubborn decision then it is obvious that the citizens would be displeased with him.

Besides the political ramifications it would have on the kingdom, the personal life of Sita would be thrown in a hell-fire of eternal grief and mental suffering because she would be forced into a marriage she does not approve of. This would cause immense grief for the entire royal family in the long run. So the citizens wonder why is the king being not reasonable and understanding; why is he not adopting himself to the changed circumstances.

Now the question arises, “what is this changed situation?” Well, the answer is clear and stark—at the time of making the vow and the declaration that Sita would be married to any warrior who would lift and break the bow, Janak was not aware of or acquainted with Lord Ram; the king had not seen him at that time. But now that he has personally seen Lord Ram and is also personally attracted to the Lord, then he must change his thinking to suit this new development. After all, a wise king is one who adapts himself to changed situations quickly, and adopts a line of action that best suits this new and changed situation. With such a suitable prince—who is obviously the best groom for Sita—being present right in front, it will be highly nonsensical for Janak to stick to some old-fashioned views and ridiculously stubborn vows that would jeopardise the future happiness of his own daughter Sita.

Therefore, the citizens argue, the king must change his way of thinking, abandon his vows and straight away marry Sita with Lord Ram. After all, Sita was his daughter and he had the full moral right to ensure her future happiness and well-being. This was no ordinary competition that was being held just to decide as to who was the greatest warrior in the world, but the future of an innocent girl was at stake. And as a father, it was the moral, social, ethical and religious duty and responsibility of Janak to see that the best option is chosen for her, the best future can be ensured for her, and she should be consulted before any final decision as it directly concerned her personal life.

Remember in this context that not only the citizens but Sita too had wanted to marry Lord Ram. Even her father, king Janak, had wanted in his heart that it would have been so nice if somehow things could be turned in favour of Sita marrying Lord Ram though he could not muster personal courage to supercede or circumvent his vows. Not only this, a big chunk of the invited kings too favoured Sita marrying Lord Ram. Hence, there would be no problem whatsoever if Janak changed his decision and declared that he has decided to marry his daughter Sita with Lord Ram.]

एहिं लालसाँ मगन सब लोगू । बरु साँवरो जानकी जोगू ॥ ६ ॥

ēhiṁ lālasāṁ magana saba lōgū. baru sām̐varō jānakī jōgū. 6.

Everyone was overwhelmed with this desire that Sita should be married with Lord Ram, and they were all convinced with the idea that the dark-complexioned prince (Lord Ram) was the most suitable groom for Janki (daughter of Janak; Sita). [All of them wanted that Sita should be married to Lord Ram.] (6)

[Note—‘Everyone’ here includes the citizens of Jankpur (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223) as well as the good kings (refer: from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246).]

तब बंदीजन जनक बोलाए । बिरिदावली कहत चलि आए ॥ ७ ॥

कह नृपु जाइ कहहु पन मोरा । चले भाट हियँ हरषु न थोरा ॥ ८ ॥

taba bandījana janaka bōlā'ē. biridāvalī kahata cali ā'ē. 7.

kaha nr̥pu jā'i kahahu pana mōrā. calē bhāṭa hiyaṁ haraṣu na thōrā. 8.

[Now, we come to the next phase of the story. After everyone was seated and Sita arrived, king Janak called in his royal heralds and ordered to them to make a formal declaration of his vow—that anyone who is able to break the formidable bow of Lord Shiva would marry Sita. This declaration would kick-start the actual competition.]

Then Janak summoned his royal criers and heralds, and they came in eulogizing his race and singing the praise of his ancestors (*biridāvalī*)¹. (7)

The king ordered them—‘Go and declare my vow to the assembly.’

The heralds immediately went on stage to do as ordered, and their hearts were very happy and excited². (8)

[Note—¹This was a normal practice with kings in olden days. When some function or celebration was organized, the royal heralds sang long adulatory verses, praising and eulogizing the great deeds done by all the kings of their master’s royal lineage.

Refer also to: “Geetawali”, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 84, stanza no. 7; (ii) verse no. 89, stanza no. 1-3.

A similar thing—of heralds singing laudatory songs praising the members of the royal family and their great race—has happened later when they have praised the dynasty of the kings of Ayodhya, the family to which Lord Ram belonged, when he along with his brothers, his father king Dasrath and the rest of the royal family members arrived in a ceremonial marriage procession for the actual marriage rituals. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 316.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 105, it is said while describing the greatness of the holy pilgrim site of Prayag (also known as Triveni, the confluence of three holy rivers—the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati) that “its greatness and holiness, its immaculate virtues and astounding spiritual glories are sung by acclaimed ‘heralds’, the Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures)”. In this case however, the ‘heralds’ are wise men and elders who praise the spiritual benefits that this holy place bestows upon those who pay their respects to it.

Another place where such heralds have been employed as a metaphor for those who sing glories is when Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are wandering in the forest, appreciating its magnificent beauty and praising its lush green environment during the spring time when the entire forest seems to become vibrant, lively and colourful. Here the Lord observes the beauty of Nature at its best, and during the course of praising its fabulous charm he cites its various sounds that enthralled his mind and heart. Amongst these fascinating sounds that were unique to that dense forest was the sound of the bird known as Chatak who was singing away merrily. The Lord says that “this Chatak is like Nature’s herald who is praising the magnificent beauty and glories of the place”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.

²King Janak had so many court heralds, but only the expert ones among them were selected to make this presentation and declare the king’s vows formally once again as a sign that the bow breaking competition has started.

Therefore, those who were selected for this purpose, those who took the stand at the podium to make this announcement, felt very honoured and privileged. That is why they felt very very happy. They felt excited because their declaration would start a competition like the one the world had never seen before. At the instant when they stood on the stage to make this declaration, all eyes were upon them, and this made them feel proud and important.]

दो०. बोले बंदी बचन बर सुनहु सकल महिपाल ।

पन बिदेह कर कहहिं हम भुजा उठाइ बिसाल ॥ २४९ ॥

dōhā.

bōlē bandī bacana bara sunahu sakala mahipāla.
pana bidēha kara kahahim hama bhujā uṭhā'i bisāla. 249.

The royal criers and heralds announced the decision of king Janak as follows—‘Listen all the great kings who have assembled here. We raise our arms high to declare the great vow¹ that Videha (king Janak) has made. (Doha no. 249)

[Note—¹The word “bisāla” technically means ‘big, huge, large, long, remarkable. In the present context however it means that the heralds raised their arms high and proclaimed in an unambiguous language the vows of king Janak. They affirmed that what they are saying is of profound importance and irrevocable, and so everyone present there should listen to them carefully. The challenge is formidable, and the reward for the winner is mighty great. This reward is described in forthcoming Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha below.

The word is an adjective, and its placement at the end of the 2nd line of this Doha is very strategic. It refers to the ‘dignified position of the heralds as representative of their king’ as well as to the ‘mighty vow of the king that is irrevocable, unique and remarkable’. So it simultaneously means—(i) that the declaration made by the heralds was done with absolute confidence, and that it was irrevocable and cannot be challenged, and (ii) it also means that the formidable vow which the king has made is also irrevocable and of immense importance. Why is it so? Because it would determine who is the strongest and the bravest warrior in the world.

‘Strongest’—because the bow was exceptionally heavy and stern, and only a person who can have the strength that matches that of Lord Shiva, to whom this bow originally belonged, would be able to lift it.

‘Bravest’—because its breaking meant challenging the might of Shiva, and it is no joke to stand up against the Lord’s wrath should he become angry on the person who dares to break the bow without his (Lord Shiva’s) permission.

And, ‘warrior’—because only someone who is an expert archer and an excellent warrior would know how to raise and string such a heavy and huge bow, and then pull its string so much back that it would snap from the middle. This feat requires astounding strength, courage, valour, skill, expertise and confidence.

Refer also to “Geetawali”, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 7.

What would be the ‘unique reward’ for someone fulfilling this ‘unique vow’ of Janak? Well, it would be the hand of Sita, the daughter of Janak and the most beautiful girl of the time, in marriage.

The following Chaupai line nos. 3-4 herein below describe what this ‘great vow’ of king Janak was, as well as its equally ‘great reward’.]

चौ०. नृप भुजबलु बिधु सिवधनु राहू । गरुअ कठोर बिदित सब काहू ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpa bhujabalu bidhu sivadhanu rāhū. garu'a kaṭhōra bidita saba kāhū. 1.

[The criers and the heralds continued with their proclamation—] 'It is well known to everyone that Shiva's bow was very heavy, sturdy, strong and stern. It was like the planet Rahu as far as the strength of the arms of all the kings and princes was concerned.

[That is, just like the case of Rahu causing the eclipse of the moon, this bow would vanquish the pride of all the kings that they are very strong, able and powerful, that there is nothing impossible for them, that to break this old and rusty bow is like a child's play for them. The bow would put all of them to shame. The shine of self-confidence, of majesty and authority, of power and pomp that is now radiating from their faces would be replaced by gloom and dejection. Soon, they would sit down with lowered heads and faces darkened by shame and loss of prestige.] (1)

[Note—Rahu is a legendary mythological demon that devours the full moon once in a while, causing the latter's eclipse. Refer note that has been appended to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 238 above which tells the story of Rahu and why he devours the moon, causing the latter's eclipse.

In the context of the present verse this metaphor means that the strongest, the most muscular, the most able and the bravest among the kings, who are proud of their strength and power and invincibility, would fail to lift and break the bow; they would be defeated by the bow. The bow would literally eclipse their glory, their reputation and fame as brave, strong and invincible warriors just like the Rahu who casts its dark shadow on the moon and eclipses the latter's magnificent brightness, its wonderful beauty and its glories—in short, the Rahu tramples underfoot the pride and vanity of the moon that it is the most attractive, the most charming and brightest object in the night sky, that it is universally used as a metaphor for beauty, charm, magnificence, attractiveness, as well as a fount of bliss, peace and joy by all the poets and bards in this world.

The moon, when it is scared out of its wits by the overbearing presence of Rahu, appears dark and gloomy as if all its glory and charm have been trampled underfoot and crushed to pieces by its nemesis, the demon Rahu.

Similarly, the pride of the assembled kings that they are extremely strong and able, that there is nothing impossible for them, that this rusty and old bow is like a child's play for them, that it would stand no chance against the might of their muscular arms—all such notions of strength, power, majesty and grandeur would be decimated and crushed the instant they go near the bow. The formidable bow of Lord Shiva would cast its dark, grim shadow of sternness and invincibility on the pride of the kings and princes, vanquishing their ego, haughtiness and arrogance, and casting a pall of gloom on all of them like the Rahu casting its dark shadow on the full moon, eclipsing it and trouncing the latter's pride of being the most wonderful entity in the whole of the night sky.

In other words, the kings are able to maintain their show of prestige, invincibility, majesty, grandeur and strength only till the time they do not touch the bow, because as soon as they touch it, the bow would suck out all their glories, the bow would crush their pride of being extremely strong and able when they fail to move it even a fraction of an inch. The kings' vanity and false pretensions of glory and majestic powers would crumble into dust. Their faces that are at present shining with pride and radiating with self-confidence would be veiled by a dark pall of gloom and dejection when all their prestige, self-respect and dignity would be crushed under the might of Lord Shiva's bow.

It is very important to note that all the kings have been compared to the 'moon' that is devoured by Rahu to cause the lunar eclipse, and no reference is made of the fact that the Rahu also causes the eclipse of the 'sun' when it devours the latter, or casts its

shadow on the sun. The reason for this clever maneuvering with words by Tulsidas is that Lord Ram, who will ultimately break the bow, belongs to the 'solar race', the Sun dynasty.

Hence, no mention is made in this verse of the Rahu eclipsing the sun because the bow, which is compared to Rahu, would not be able to stand against the will and strength of Lord Ram, of the 'solar race', as the Lord would easily break it; the bow would not be able to resist Lord Ram as it did in the case of all other kings.

Unlike the other kings (compared to the 'moon') who were defeated by the bow (compared to 'Rahu') as it refused to be moved by them, Lord Ram (compared to the 'sun') was easily able to defeat the bow by lifting and breaking it. The 'lifting and breaking' of the bow by Lord Ram was tantamount to crushing the pride and ego of the bow that no one can stand against its might and powers.

It was a sort of punishment for the bow that it was being too arrogant and haughty. Through this breaking of the bow, Lord Ram gave a signal to the demons and all the other evil forces in this world that enough was enough, that though they could have their way till now, their evil game was soon going to come to an end as the Lord has arrived to eliminate them and neutralise their evil powers.

Ram was Lord Vishnu himself personified because Lord Shiva did not oppose nor felt angry when the Lord broke his (Shiva's) bow. This is because Shiva had already suffered defeat at the hands of Vishnu on an earlier occasion when both of them fought using their respective bows, Shiva using the bow that was to be broken today, and Vishnu using his famed bow known as Saarang. This fight was orchestrated by the creator Brahma at the behest of the gods who wanted to know which of the two great bows—one held by Vishnu and the other by Shiva—was better and the greatest. Both these bows were created by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods. When Shiva was defeated, he got so annoyed and disgusted with his bow that he discarded it as he did not want to have it with him in future, and so he gave it to an ancestor of king Janak. Shiva himself secretly wanted this bow destroyed as it was a symbol of his defeat. But who in this creation would ever gather courage to destroy a bow that was once held in the hands of the greatest of gods, the Great Lord known as Mahadeva or Shiva? This destroyer had to be Lord Vishnu because not only had he actually defeated Shiva during that confrontation and therefore there was no question of his insulting or undermining Shiva's dignity or greatness by breaking the latter's bow, but also because Lord Shiva himself was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Ram. In fact, Lord Shiva always repeated the holy name of Lord Ram as his chosen Mantra (spiritual formula); Shiva had Lord Ram enshrined in his heart as his dearest Lord.

Hence, Lord Shiva would not feel affronted at all—but would rather feel happy and give his nod—when Lord Ram would break this bow, as it had been forsaken and discarded by Shiva himself. This bow was a constant source of irritation for Lord Shiva as it reminded him of this unfortunate incident when he was instigated to fight with his beloved and revered Lord Vishnu just because the selfish gods wished to determine which of the two bows constructed by Vishwakarma was stronger and better. Shiva wanted to erase this bitter memory, and he wanted to convey a message to Lord Vishnu, albeit in the latter's form as Lord Ram, that the earlier incident when they had fought was not out of Shiva's own wish or volition but due to some mischievous maneuvering by the gods. So, Lord Vishnu must forgive him (Shiva) and bury any kind of misunderstanding that he (Vishnu) might harbour against Shiva.

So we find that Lord Shiva had used this opportunity of breaking of his bow by Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to reiterate his (Shiva's) eternal love and respect for Lord Vishnu, and to tell the demons that it would be useless for them to seek any help from Shiva against Lord Ram.

Another significant connotation of breaking of this bow of Lord Shiva is this:—The demons were worshippers of Lord Shiva. Their king, Ravana of Lanka, was himself a great devotee of Shiva. In fact, he had offered his heads to the Lord ten times on some earlier occasion, and Shiva had been so pleased with this offering that he had blessed Ravana that all his ten heads would not only be restored but if anyone cuts any of these heads in the future they would grow back on his neck instantly. This is why Lord Ram had been unable to kill Ravana during the epic war at Lanka by merely cutting his heads repeatedly with his arrows. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Doha no. 28; and (iii) Doha no. 92 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 10-14.

Ravana had also composed a sacred hymn in honour of Shiva, called the Ravana's Shiva-Tandav Stotra, which is said to be the most difficult of all hymns ever composed in honour of the Lord.

The might of Ravana's arms, his dare-devilry and his fearlessness from Lord Shiva can be judged by the fact that once he had effortlessly lifted or 'uprooted' Mt. Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. This meant that Ravana had the strength and the guts to lift the entire weight of this lofty mountain along with Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati who permanently live there as it is their terrestrial abode. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 292; (b) Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.

Both the above facts—i.e. offering of his own heads ten times, and lifting of Mt. Kailash—have been repeated by Ravana often to boast about his strength, fearlessness and powers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Ravana's exploits are legendary and have been elaborately listed at many places in Ram Charit Manas—e.g. (i) in Baal Kand where the origin and establishment of the demon race is described (refer Baal Kand: from Doha no. 178—to Doha/Sortha no. 183); (ii) in Lanka Kand where Ravana and Angad—whom Lord Ram had sent in an effort to persuade the demon king Ravana to give Sita back and avoid a ruinous war—had an acrimonious, no-holds-barred bitter verbal duel (refer Lanka Kand: Doha no. 25 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; Doha no. 28 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8); and (iii) in Lanka Kand when Ravana's wife Mandadori tried to persuade her husband to stop being pervert, abandon his stubborn recklessness, and become reasonable so that the demon race escapes annihilation (refer Lanka Kand: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha nos. 8).

But we find that the same mighty and virtually invincible Ravana had not dared to touch Shiva's bow though he was present in the arena. If he had stood up and went up the steps leading to the platform where the bow was kept, all other competing kings would have scrambled for cover to hide themselves as all of them feared this ferocious demon king and would not have certainly not dared to challenge Ravana. Therefore, the decision of Ravana to quietly make his escape and not attempt to break the bow shows that he harboured some secret fear of defeat and humiliation. These facts are mentioned in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places, viz. (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 292; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 256; and (iv) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 37.

The point is this—by breaking Lord Shiva's bow fearlessly and effortlessly, Lord Ram sent a strong signal to the entire demon race, and especially to Ravana, their king, that he (Lord Ram) was not an ordinary person but the Supreme Lord of the world who has come down to earth to control their (demons') cruelty and tyranny. The demons must

realize that only someone more divine and powerful than Shiva would dare to break the latter's bow. Ravana must understand that someone who can easily lift and break Lord Shiva's formidable bow, which even he (Ravana) had not dared to touch, must be some Divine Being and not an ordinary human being.

We shall read later on in the story that Ravana—who was very wise and learned—got this hint; he could read this subtle message. This becomes clear at the time when he decides to abduct Sita so that Lord Ram would come to rescue her and kill him in the ensuing war, because he is convinced in his mind that this is the only way his sinful body of a demon can be eliminated, and his soul can find liberation and deliverance from this body's bondage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 23.

Again we find that at the time of Sita's abduction, Ravana had first mentally bowed his head at the holy feet of Sita to pay his respects to her, felt exceptionally happy to have this golden opportunity to find a way for his and other demons' liberation, and then took her away—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

रावनु बानु महाभट भारे । देखि सरासन गवँहिं सिधारे ॥ २ ॥
 सोइ पुरारि कोदंडु कठोरा । राज समाज आजु जोड़ तोरा ॥ ३ ॥
 त्रिभुवन जय समेत बैदेही । बिनहिं बिचार बरड़ हठि तेही ॥ ४ ॥

rāvanu bānu mahābhaṭa bhārē. dēkhi sarāsana gavam̐hīm sidhārē. 2.
 sō'i purāri kōdaṇḍu kaṭhōrā. rāja samāja āju jō'i tōrā. 3.
 tribhuvana jaya samēta baidēhī. binahīm bicāra bara'i haṭhi tēhī. 4.

'Ravana and Banasur are two great and formidable demons. They saw the bow and silently sneaked away (without even touching it)¹. (2)

It is the same bow of Lord Shiva (that scared Ravana and Banasur out of their wits because they felt that their strength would fail in front of this bow, and to escape certain embarrassment and humiliation they simply slithered out of this arena silently!) that is the challenge for you all. In this majestic assembly of great and mighty kings from all corners of the world, anyone who breaks this formidable bow---(3)

---would not only get the rare honour and an enviable prestige of conquering 'Tribhuvan' (i.e. the entire world consisting of three sections, viz. the heavens, the earth and the nether world or the subterranean world)² but would also get the hands of Vaidehi (the daughter of king Videha, Janak, i.e. Sita) in marriage. Vaidehi would marry him without any second thoughts.' (4)

[Note—¹Refer an extensive note appended to Chaupai line no. 1 above.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/85, stanza no. 3.

These two demons had come to the place of the bow-breaking ceremony thinking that lifting and breaking an old rusty bow was not even worth thinking twice, and that they would lift and break it effortlessly. The trophy was a girl, Sita, who was considered the most beautiful in this world at that time. But when they actually saw the bow they realized that it was beyond their means to lift it and break it. So there was no sense in inviting ridicule and laughter in an assembly where all the great kings and princes of the time were present. All of them had heard of Ravana and Banasur, and if these two demon

warriors, who were famed for their strength and valour, were unable to move the bow then there would be nothing more shameful and ignominious for them. So they quietly sneaked away to save their faces.

Out of so many famous demons mentioned in the Purans (ancient mythological histories of Hindus) whose might and strength were legendary and who even the gods feared, only Ravana and Banasur are mentioned here. Why is it so? The context here is the 'lifting' of a mighty and heavy bow. So, only those demon warriors who had proven track records of being so strong and powerful that they could very easily and effortlessly lift the mightiest of mountains were selected by the heralds to impress upon the assembly that it would be no joke to lift this bow.

'Banasur' had lifted Mt. Meru, the abode of gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 292; and 'Ravana' had lifted Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 292.

These two demons ran away because they realized that this bow was heavier than either of the two mountains, viz. Mt. Sumeru and Mt. Kailash. They did not dare even to touch the bow because they felt sure they won't be able to move it. In other words, the bow was heavier than these two mighty mountains. Hence, the challenge which the kings faced was of stupendous nature, and therefore they must think many times over before showing-off any dare-devilry.

This warning was very crucial and practical as far as king Janak was concerned. In case no invited king or prince was able to lift the bow, then none of them would be able to accuse the king that he had deliberately wanted to insult all of them by not warning them or disclosing to them in advance the special features and unique characters of the bow, and instead instigating them to go and lift the bow with the bait that they would marry his daughter Sita while being certain throughout that all of them would fail to move the bow, what to talk of lifting and breaking it. That means the kings would surmise that Janak had the intent of humiliating all the great kings and princes of the time, and with this in mind he had organized this bow-breaking ceremony. This would lead to revolt and blood-shed.

Hence, as a precautionary measure it was prudent for Janak to disclose in advance the fact that the bow was exceptionally heavy and strong, and to drive home this point the heralds cited the instance of Ravana and Banasur who could not muster enough strength and courage to even attempt to lift the bow.

If we closely examine verse nos. 2-3 we deduce that Ravana and Banasur had already left the venue at the time the heralds made the announcement. It means that these two great demons had arrived at the arena, saw the bow, perhaps even went near it and consulted each other, and then decided that it was better to go away while still there was time to save face. The spies of king Janak were keeping a close watch on all the visitors, and this bit of information was passed on to the king by them, who then instructed his heralds to mention it.

The fact of Ravana having gone to the bow-breaking ceremony and not having the courage to lift the bow was known to his wife Mandodari as she has mentioned this fact while chiding him for abducting Sita to avenge his humiliation, but inviting a ruinous war on Lanka in the process because Lord Ram and his army had launched an assault to free Sita from his captivity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 36.

But another question now arises—the demons were well known in this world, and their external features of a 'demon' made them stand out from the rest of the living beings, such as the kings and princes in this case. So, why were the kings not able to recognize them? The answer is found in king Janak's statement in Baal Kand, Chaupai

line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251 where he says, while rebuking the kings when none of them were able to move the bow, that—“even the gods and demons have also come here in the form of human beings (kings)”.

This fact is also endorsed elsewhere. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 241, it is said that—“in that assembly, gods and demons were present in the guise of kings”.

Remember: The demons were capable of assuming any form they wished—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, 2nd part of Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75.

These observations clearly show that these two great demons, Ravana and Banasur, had indeed visited the site of the bow-breaking ceremony though they did not participate, but it was in the form of a king.

²The word “Tribhuvan” has been cleverly used here. Its normal meaning is the world that has three divisions—viz. heaven, earth and nether or subterranean world. But it also indicates the three legendary cities (“Tri” = three; “Bhuvan” = world, habitat, home) of demon Tripura which were destroyed by Lord Shiva, along with the killing of this demon, by using this same bow. Hence, this bow represents the conquest of three invincible cities or worlds.

Therefore, anyone who breaks this bow, which had helped Lord Shiva to conquer Tripura and his three cities, would be deemed as the conqueror of the whole world.]

सुनि पन सकल भूप अभिलाषे । भटमानी अतिसय मन माखे ॥ ५ ॥
परिकर बाँधि उठे अकुलाई । चले इष्टदेवन्ह सिर नाई ॥ ६ ॥

sunī pana sakala bhūpa abhilāṣē. bhaṭamānī atisaya mana mākhē. 5.
parikara bāṁdhi uṭhē akulāī. calē iṣṭadēvanha sira nāī. 6.

Hearing this vow (of king Janak), all the kings became eager or greedy (to break the bow and get acclaim as being the strongest warrior in the whole world, as well as get Sita in marriage as a trophy for this victory). Those among them who were more egoist and proud of themselves became very angry or annoyed (at the words of the heralds that even Ravana and Banasur had not dared to touch the bow, and therefore they should be careful before attempting any misadventure).¹ (5)

They rose from their seats impatiently, girdled up their loin-cloths (i.e. tied the waist-bands tightly around their waists to indicate that they are ready to face any challenge), and moved towards the bow eagerly after bowing their heads before their respective deities (gods) whom they worshipped.² (6)

[Note—¹All the kings were waiting for this moment. They could not understand the subtle message which the announcement of the heralds contained—that they must think twice before attempting to lift the bow because even the famous demons Ravana and Banasur, who were well known for the might of their arms, had not dared to touch it, lest they would repent later on and blame their host, king Janak, of scheming to insult them en-masse.

The kings were in a quandary: if they did not rise to the occasion, if they kept sitting in the face of this open challenge, then it would be deemed that they have accepted defeat. No self-respecting king would like this humiliation to be heaped on him in this disrespectful way. After all, they had come to participate in the bow ceremony on their own volition and with the clear knowledge that a bow had to be broken. Now if they keep

sitting, what would their subjects and companions think of them? It was a piquant situation for them, and when left with no choice between the devil and the deep sea, they decided to try their luck.

This was a normal reaction for competing kings who were invited for an open competition—it makes no sense for anyone in accepting defeat even without attempting to win. This was the first sort of kings who stood up to try their luck.

However, there were many among them who were full of vanity and excessively haughty, proud and egoist. They became angry and annoyed because the heralds had implied that if Ravana and Banasur could not lift the bow then no one can do it. They must have angrily snorted and said under their breaths—“How dare the heralds say so in our presence? Are they threatening us or challenging our self-respect and dignity? What if Ravana or Banasur did not touch the bow? It does not mean that if these two demons did not touch the bow that no one else would be able to move it or lift it? How dare king Janak challenge our strength and power and insult us in this manner. What nonsense is this? Come what may, we will now show these people (the hosts) that we are strong and powerful, and after breaking this rotten and god forsaken bow we will make Janak beg for forgiveness for making so outrightly an insinuating and taunting remark.”

²All the competing kings were eager to be the first ones to approach the bow and break it. Everyone was sure that he would break it, and therefore all wanted to be the first person to try his luck at the bow, because if anyone else does it before they get a chance then that person would win the competition, and with it he will get the accompanying fame as the greatest and the strongest king of the world as well as the hands of Sita in marriage.

Hence, all of them rose impatiently from their seats to go to the bow as quickly as possible because there was no time to be lost. In order to ensure victory, they invoked the respective deities they worshipped at home to seek the latter's blessings. As we shall find shortly, all of them failed to move the bow even for a fraction of an inch in spite of their invoking these deities.

What does it indicate in respect to these kings invoking their gods or deities but still failing; why did these deities fail to help their devotees; were these deities helpless or powerless? Well, there is a very important message hidden in this development—and it is this: a person must worship only the Supreme Lord, and not so many gods and goddesses as these kings did. Can a junior king or a knight defy the wishes of the Emperor under whose patronage or tutelage he survives? Can a junior king ever retain his kingdom or domain if he goes against the will of the Emperor?

The ‘Emperor’ or the ‘Supreme Being’ here is Lord Ram, as he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush and the Supreme Lord of the world. Even Lord Shiva, who himself is honoured by the epithet of a Great God, the ‘Maha-Deva’, could not or did not interfere with Lord Ram breaking the bow. The Mother Goddess, Parvati, had already blessed Sita that her wishes to marry Lord Ram would be fulfilled. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 236 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and the Chanda that follows them.)

All other gods and goddesses are junior to Lord Shiva and Parvati respectively. These kings did not realize that even Lord Shiva himself worships Lord Ram and repeats the holy name of the Lord, i.e. “RAM”, as his chosen Mantra (spiritual formula). For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60 etc.

Parvati had herself bowed at the holy feet of Lord Ram on some previous occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

So in this situation, with Lord Ram himself present in the assembly, and that too in the company of the great sage Vishwamitra, it was an exercise in futility for these ignorant kings to boast of their strengths (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245) and then ask their respective deities to support them in their pretensions (as indicated in the present Chaupai no. 6).]

तमकि ताकि तकि सिवधनु धरहीं । उठइ न कोटि भाँति बलु करहीं ॥ ७ ॥
जिन्ह के कछु बिचारु मन माहीं । चाप समीप महीप न जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

tamaki tāki taki sivadhanu dharahīm. uṭha'i na kōṭi bhām̐ti balu karahīm. 7.
jinha kē kachu bicāru mana māhīm. cāpa samīpa mahīpa na jāhīm. 8.

When the (haughty and adamant) kings approached the bow in a huff, they looked at it contemptuously, grabbed it angrily, grappled with it with all their strength and skill, but still the stubborn bow did not move a bit though they tried and tried repeatedly with all their might, applying the best of tactics that they were aware of¹. (7)

But those kings who had some wisdom and common sense in them sensed that it is better not to make a fool out of themselves, and so they did not even go near the bow to try to move and lift it². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 4 also.

As we have observed in the note of the previous verse, all the kings who decided to break the bow did not waste any time because they wanted to get a first chance to lift it and break it lest someone else beats them to it and is declared victorious. In this situation, there was a virtual rush for the bow. The competing kings pushed and shoved each other, huffing and puffing, not bothering to maintain basic dignity and solemnity of the occasion. They all milled around the bow and jostled with each other.

So, as soon as the kings reached the bow, they grabbed it contemptuously, and when it did not budge from its position they naturally became angry and annoyed. Initially, in their first attempt, they may have thought that it is easy to lift this old and rusted bow. But soon they discovered to their dismay that this wretched bow is quite a bit of challenge for them. So they became alarmed and applied all the tricks of the warrior's profession as well as all the strength they possessed to make this stubborn bow move. No matter how hard and expertly they all tried, first one after another, and then jointly (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 below), the bow did not relent at all; it did not budge a fraction of an inch from its place.

Imagine the scene. There were thousands of kings and princes vying with each other to lift the bow. In the beginning, the more domineering ones amongst the kings elbowed in forcefully and pushed aside their competitors to be the first ones to touch the bow and lift it. When they showed signs of frustration, those who were waiting for their turn must have passed caustic or sarcastic comments at them, further irritating the kings who were at the bow. There must have been howls of cat-calls, smirks and smiles all around.

The kings waiting for their chance were closely observing those kings who were attempting to lift the bow; they observed the different manoeuvres and moves the kings were making in their attempt to lift the bow. So, while waiting for their own chance, they must have been thinking of some newer tactics and planning better strategies to tackle the adamant bow. As more and more kings failed dismally and either returned to their seats or stood around planning better strategies, abject despondency was writ large on their

faces. They were all crestfallen, had lowered heads heavy with shame, bore a haggard look of defeat and ignominy.

²Meanwhile, those kings who were waiting for their turn watched these defeated kings, creating alarm and fear of certain defeat and humiliation in their own minds. A lot many of the kings must have cursed themselves to come here at all because their confidence collapsed; they felt that they have but little chance to win. But now it was a sticky situation because it was too late to withdraw: to return without trying their hand at the bow would make them a laughing stock in the assembly. So they consulted amongst themselves and took the position that since it is too late to go back now, it's better to try to lift the bow. In case they succeed, well and good; and in case they failed, then also their shame would be less marked as there were hundreds of kings who had failed before them and had walked away with lowered heads. Hence they thought that by the time they return empty-handed, a pall of gloom would already have descended upon the assembly as one after another king returned defeated. So their own defeat would not attract as much attention as the case of those kings who were defeated in the beginning of the competition.

The first batch of defeated kings faced hooting and cat-calls, but gradually the atmosphere became sombre and grave. The latter round of defeats was expected, and therefore they invited little attention and raised fewer eye-brows as compared to the case with the initial round of defeats because the more strong and powerful amongst the kings were the ones who had pushed themselves ahead of the line to make the first attempt, and all of them had already failed. Therefore, those kings who were in the back of the queue, those who still had to try their luck, could see their fate coming, as did the crowd watching the competition from the stands. Hence, these waiting kings decided to hold fast and try to lift the bow nevertheless, instead of going back to their seats at this late stage, because they had nothing to lose.]

दो०. तमकि धरहिं धनु मूढ़ नृप उठइ न चलहिं लजाइ ।
मनहुँ पाइ भट बाहुबलु अधिकु अधिकु गरुआइ ॥ २५० ॥

dōhā.

tamaki dharahim dhanu mūrha nrpa uṭha'i na calahim lajā'i.
manahum' pā'i bhaṭa bāhubalu adhiku adhiku garu'ā'i. 250.

The stupid kings indignantly tried to move the bow with all their might, but no matter how hard they strained the bow refused to be lifted. At last, all of them went away in shame, being overcome with a sense of abject despair and despondency.

It appeared that the bow mysteriously absorbed the strength of these kings, becoming heavier with each attempt they made¹. (Doha no. 250)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech employed by the poet Tulsidas to emphasise that the bow was so heavy that it surpassed the combined strength of all the kings. This fact will be clear when we read the next verse which says that it did not move even when all the kings—numbering ten thousand—applied their combined strength to make it move.

In practical terms the meaning is that the bow was very very heavy on its own account from the beginning; it was so built. It hadn't actually absorbed any strength from any king; it's impossible for this to happen. But one after another each king thought that his predecessor was not as strong as he, and when he himself failed to move the bow it

appeared to all those present that the bow was becoming heavier with each new attempt made by all subsequent kings who tried to move it.]

चौ०. भूप सहस दस एकहि बारा । लगे उठावन टरइ न टारा ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

bhūpa sahasa dasa ēkahi bārā. lagē uṭhāvana ṭara'i na ṭārā. 1.

Ten thousand kings tried to move and lift the bow simultaneously, but to their utter dismay the bow did not move even a bit inspite of all their rigorous effort and straining that they made. (1)

[Note—In the beginning the kings tried to move the bow individually. But when all of them failed they threw all caution and principles of morality to the wind by trying to lift the bow together. Did they give a thought that if all of them—ten thousand of them!—succeeded in lifting and breaking the bow then what would be the fate of Sita. It would be a most incredulous development to happen if they indeed succeeded in their attempt—because then Sita would be married to “ten thousand kings”! It is hilarious and incredibly ridiculous to even think of this, what to talk of this actually materialising.

This very thought that one girl would have to share “ten thousand husbands” is exceedingly immoral and against the basic norms of a civilised society; it's against the principles of ‘Dharma’—the principles of probity, propriety, ethics and proper conduct. Did these frustrated kings ever think of it? No—and this is the reason why such kings were called sinful, wicked and pervert, who had become blind in their vanity, passion and ego, in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 245 earlier.

Now, if we read this verse along with its preceding verses we come to the conclusion that after being unable to move the bow individually, either the kings returned to their seats and kept a low profile to avoid further embarrassment, or they stood milling around the bow planning new strategies amongst themselves. Of course all of them were smarting from the insult, so when none could move the bow they made a clarion call: “Come all of you; we will not go back without lifting this wretched bow and allowing this lifeless rusty thing to humiliate us in this abject fashion. So let us all put our combined strength together to trounce this stubborn bow and regain our lost prestige and self-respect. This old and rusty piece of a nuisance, the wretched ‘bow’, won't be able to stand against our combined will and power. So brothers and friends, let us stand together to defeat this enemy that has put all of us to shame. We won't allow this to happen!”

One wonders how so many kings could find place to stand shoulder to shoulder and simultaneously touch the bow in order to move or push it. Well, the most plausible answer is that they must have tied a number of iron chains to the bow and pulled at it together. Or, since the verse says that the bow refused to be “lifted”, it may have been some sort of heavy-duty pulley that they used.]

डगइ न संभु सरासनु कैसैं । कामी बचन सती मनु जैसैं ॥ २ ॥

daga'i na sambhu sarāsanu kaisēm. kāmī bacana satī manu jaisēm. 2.

No matter how hard the kings tried, Lord Shiva's bow would not move even a bit just like the case of a Sati (a chaste and honourable woman who is loyal and faithful to her husband) who remains unmoved and unaffected by passionate and lustful words said by a lascivious and immoral man. (2)

[Note—A “Sati” pays no attention to lustful advances of a lascivious man who tries his best to lure her into having an affair with him.

The comparison of the bow with a Sati is significant. A Sati is devoted to her husband, and no matter how hard a pervert man tries to attract her attention, she neglects him. The Sati has a dominance of ‘Satvic Guna’ (virtuous qualities) in her, while the lascivious man has ‘Tama Guna’ (evil qualities) as his dominant character.

Here, the bow is of a ‘Sata Guna’ because it belonged to Lord Shiva, and therefore it is like the Sati and held its ground against the efforts of the greedy kings who were like the lustful man because they had predominance of ‘Tama Guna’ in them. These kings were boastful as well as sinful as they had not bothered about the fate of innocent Sita should they succeed in breaking the bow in their “thousands”. Hence, the Sata Guna driven bow decided to teach these Tama Guna driven kings by not moving a bit.]

सब नृप भए जोगु उपहासी । जैसैं बिनु बिराग संन्यासी ॥ ३ ॥

कीरति बिजय बीरता भारी । चले चाप कर बरबस हारी ॥ ४ ॥

saba nṛpa bha'e jōgu upahāsī. jaisēm binu birāga sann'yāsī. 3.
kīrati bijaya bīratā bhārī. calē cāpa kara barabasa hārī. 4.

All the vain kings made themselves objects of high ridicule, laughter and scorn just like a Sanyasi (a renunciate; a recluse) who lacks Vairagya (renunciation, detachment, dispassion etc.) (3)

All of them helplessly forfeited their claim of fame, glory, victory and bravery at the hands of the bow. (4)

[Note—Everyone laughed at the defeated king, especially those kings who had desisted from making an attempt themselves and had even advised these kings to avoid sure humiliation by not going near the bow because it was certain that Sita would be married to Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4, and 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 246.

But the haughty kings won't listen, and instead, they boasted that no one can marry Sita without breaking the bow as long as they were present—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245.

Now such kings had no answer; all their vanity and haughtiness, all their loud-mouthed talk of valour and strength crumbled like ninepins and a house of cards.

The condition of the defeated kings was like a Sanyasi who remains attached to the attractions of the material world and harbours desires in his heart for gratification of the senses inspite of his taking the vows of renunciation and declaring his detachment from everything pertaining to the material world. People laugh at such persons; they are subjected to scorn and ridicule by everyone they meet; they are put to shame and invite ignominy. Then they repent that it would have been wiser and better if they hadn't become a Sanyasi in the first place. Likewise, the defeated kings now regretted and lamented that it would have been better for them if they had paid attention to warnings by wiser kings and had refrained from participating in the competition.

All their boast of strength, valour, power and majesty was reduced to dust against the formidable wall of the bow; they could not scale it (refer: the present Chaupai no. 4). All their hopes of being declared the “greatest warrior of all times, the most powerful and the strongest king in the entire world who has won the hands of Sita in marriage after being declared victorious in the once-in-a-lifetime competition (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250)” crumbled like a clod of mud when it hits a wall.

The infamy and humiliation was more striking when they could not move the bow as compared to a defeat at the hands of a human enemy during a battle because in the latter case at least the enemy is alive, is active, and it is a duel where both parties try their best in a dynamic manner to subdue the other, but in the case of the bow the latter laid passively on its platform, it did not fight back like a human enemy, but still managed to defeat the kings by not moving a bit.]

श्रीहत भए हारि हियँ राजा । बैठे निज निज जाइ समाजा ॥ ५ ॥

śrīhata bha'ē hāri hiyam' rājā. baiṭhē nija nija jā'i samājā. 5.

Despondent, crestfallen, distraught, disheartened, embarrassed and humiliated (śrīhata bha'ē), the defeated kings went to their seats and sat down in the company of those who had accompanied them to the venue (such as their ministers, courtiers, attendants etc.). (5)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 5 also.

After being humiliated en-masse by the adamant bow as described in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 above, all the kings—remember, they were “ten thousand of them”—lost all shine on their faces, which now looked weary, haggard and ashamed. They dragged themselves somehow to their seats and slumped in them. Their friends and relatives tried to comfort them to the best of their abilities. They must have hidden their faces in their palms to avoid the glare of the assembly. They must have been wringing their hands and squirming in their seats in anger at being forced to accept defeat from such an inconsequential and lifeless thing as an old and rusty bow.

They were waiting for revenge, and the opportunity would soon come. We shall soon read that when Sita was putting the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, these kings rose in revolt and there was a sudden spectre of a looming war and mayhem. It was at this instant that sage Parashuram arrived angrily at the venue to punish anyone who had dared to break his revered Lord Shiva's bow. Seeing this angry sage, all the kings scrambled for cover and hid themselves wherever they could—because Parashuram had a reputation of killing members of the Kshatriya (kingly or warrior) race at the least provocation. It was so planned by the Creator that nothing would go wrong—because the arrival of Parashuram at the moment when the kings had drawn their weapons and were ready for a fight had prevented a battle which otherwise was sure to have taken place. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268; and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 269.]

नृपन्ह बिलोकि जनकु अकुलाने । बोले बचन रोष जनु साने ॥ ६ ॥

nrpanha bilōki janaku akulānē. bōlē bacana rōṣa janu sānē. 6.

Seeing the defeated kings who bore signs of abject despair and excess of shame writ large on their faces (and all of them had literally surrendered before the stubbornness of the 'bow' which had decided not to yield any ground and to inflict shame and humiliation on all the competing kings in one single master-stroke), king Janak became exceedingly peeved, impatient and worried (janaku akulānē).

[This was obviously because if none of the kings or princes could break the bow, his daughter would have to remain unmarried. This was an eventuality no father would want to happen. Janak was getting impatient as the time was passing away fast and in spite of all their efforts none of the warriors could move the bow an inch. He was worried about the fate that awaited his daughter, as well as the spectre of war that loomed large when he observed the belligerent mood of the competing kings who he guessed would raise their swords and begin a fight to hide their shame and defeat.]

Then he (stood up and) spoke words that had a clear tinge of anger in them.

[In other words, when all the kings failed to move the bow and returned to their seats defeated and crestfallen, king Janak stood up and rebuked all of them. He vented his frustration and rebuked all of them in angry words which follow below.] (6)

[Note—Refer also: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; and (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 5.

King Janak was the most concerned man in the assembly because it was he who would have to bear with the ignominy and pain of being instrumental in ruining the future of his daughter by making such an incongruous vow that was impractical to implement. Now, what will he do; how will he show his face to the world; what would his own subjects say about him; how will he morally answer his daughter whose future was ruined by his stubbornness; wasn't he becoming a butt of laughter in the society?

Though his intention was good—that he must find the strongest and ablest warrior for his daughter, but he had not been practical and had not weighed the pros and cons of his decision of tying his daughter's future with a bow that belonged to Lord Shiva. He should have thought over the matter and consulted senior members of the society, such as Brahmins and others, before deciding to get this special bow that belonged to no one less than Lord Shiva himself broken for such a humdrum worldly routine affair as getting his daughter married. He repented now for his decision; he lamented that he had made a great mistake by annoying Shiva by putting the sanctity of the Lord's bow at stake—because getting it 'broken' could be interpreted as an insult to Lord Shiva. 'Why didn't I think of it?—the king must have regretted.

All the competing kings would go home and forget about this bitter incident over time, but what would Janak do? As long as he lives, this incident would keep biting at his conscience and make life hell for him.

But now it was too late. Janak was extremely perturbed and disheartened. His frustration manifested itself in the form of anger and rebuke for the kings.]

दीप दीप के भूपति नाना । आए सुनि हम जो पनु ठाना ॥ ७ ॥

देव दनुज धरि मनुज सरीरा । बिपुल बीर आए रनधीरा ॥ ८ ॥

dīpa dīpa kē bhūpati nānā. ā'ē suni hama jō panu ṭhānā. 7.

dēva danuja dhari manuja sarīrā. bipula bīra ā'ē ranadhīrā. 8.

#The king spoke in a stern voice with a tone marked by anger, rebuke and frustration—‘Countless great kings from all the continents and islands on earth (“Deep, Deep”—i.e. from all corners of the earth) have come here after hearing of my vows (that they would have to participate in a competition where Lord Shiva’s bow was to be lifted and broken, and anyone who succeeded in it would not only be gifted my daughter Sita in marriage but would also be declared the most gallant and strong king in the entire world¹). (7)

What to talk of human beings, even the gods and the great demons have come here in the guise of humans. There are innumerable warriors of all hues and denominations, warriors who pride themselves for their gallantry, strength, valour, courage and invincibility, who have assembled here. (8)

[Note—#King Janak’s angry words and expression of utter disgust and frustration as well as regret and feeling of sorrow at the fate of Sita has been narrated in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza nos. 6-7 also.

¹Refer: The declaration of the heralds in Doha no. 249 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-4.]

दो०. कुअँरि मनोहर बिजय बड़ि कीरति अति कमनीय ।
पावनिहार बिरंचि जनु रचेउ न धनु दमनीय ॥ २५१ ॥

dōhā.

ku'am̐ri manōhara bijaya baḍi kīrati ati kamanīya.
pāvanihāra biran̐ci janu racē'u na dhanu damanīya. 251.

In spite of a beautiful princess as the prize to be won (in the form of marriage with her), along with a triumph that would have bestowed astounding fame and splendid glory of being the strongest and the most powerful warrior of the world, a glory and fame that would have been matchless, fabulous and awe-inspiring—it is so frustrating and dismaying to discover that it appears the Creator has not made anyone who could match this honour, who could get this credit by breaking the bow. It appears that the bow was made not to be broken by anyone created by the Creator! (Doha no. 251)

[Note—King Janak sternly rebuked the competing kings. All of them had boasting till now of their strength and valour and the greatness of the family they belonged to. Why then could they not break the bow? Is it because they did not put their heart and soul and best of efforts into lifting and breaking the bow as they thought it not worthwhile because the reward for being successful was not upto their expectations? And therefore, is this the reason why none could break the bow? This factor played heavily in the mind of Janak when he chided the kings with his observation about the uniqueness of the reward—viz. the hands of Sita, who was matchless in beauty and charm in this world, in marriage.

At the same time, it seems out of place for a father of king Janak’s stature to call his own daughter “a beautiful princess as the prize to be won” in a public place. It must be remembered here that Janak is overwhelmed by anger and frustration and worry about his daughter, and in this tumultuous state of mind which was under immense emotional stress he had forgotten about what to say and what not to.

Besides this aspect, the point that Janak wished to make was that if the kings and princes hadn’t known that his daughter Sita was exceptionally beautiful, they wouldn’t have rushed to try their luck in marrying her. Of course they also knew that this marriage

was tied to the breaking of the bow, but in their eagerness and greed to grab Sita as their wife they had overlooked that this bow was not an ordinary one but belonged to Lord Shiva, a fact that should have rung alarm bells in their minds. They had become so greedy and passionate that they thought they would be able to break the bow by invoking the blessings of their personal deities, something they actually did—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 250. Then now, what has happened? Aren't they all ashamed of themselves? Shame to all of them!

In order to understand why the kings decided to participate in this competition inspite of knowing that the bow that was to be broken belonged to Lord Shiva and it would be a formidable obstacle in their realising their dream of marrying Sita, we must look at the natural character and mentality of kings. All these kings must have thought that it made sense to at least try their luck, for if they succeeded then the rewards were great. After all, kings are not averse to taking risks to enhance their reputation and expand their realms by conquest. They are accustomed in equal measure to defeat and victory; they take such things in their stride. The kings are, by nature and habit, impulsive, egoist and full of vanity; they want to grab everything on offer. Shying away from open challenge is demeaning and insulting for them. And for this they usually don't bother too much for the consequences of their actions, nor do they do too much of procrastination before acting—because they want to be the first one to grab the honour of being valiant and brave. If they defer decisions then someone else would grab the opportunity.

As for the stupendity of the fame and glory that would accompany the breaking of the bow, the heralds of Janak had already declared them in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 250 above.]

चौ०. कहहु काहि यहु लाभु न भावा । काहुँ न संकर चाप चढ़ावा ॥ १ ॥
रहउ चढ़ाउब तोरब भाई । तिलु भरि भूमि न सके छड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu kāhi yahu lābhu na bhāvā. kāhum'na saṅkara cāpa caṛhāvā. 1.
raha'u caṛhā'uba tōraba bhā'ī. tilu bhari bhūmi na sakē charā'ī. 2.

Say, who would not like to get this reward and honour? Say then, why couldn't anyone lift and string this bow of Lord Shiva? (1)

Forget about lifting and string it or breaking it, no one could as much as move it even a bit from the ground! [How shameful and ignominious it is; how disgusting and humiliating it is.] (2)

[Note—King Janak prodded the competing kings to come clean and to tell the assembly the actual reason for their not making an all-out effort to break the bow if the case is such. It is simply unbelievable that not a single person could as much as move an old rusty bow an inch from its place on the ground, though all those who tried their hands had prided themselves as great warriors of matchless reputation, as very strong and powerful kings. Where has all that boast gone now?

Why, if some amongst the kings thought that the challenge of breaking the bow was too small for them as it undermined their dignity and self-respect by trying to test their gallantry, valour, strength and prowess against an old and rusty thing, then they must

remember that king Janak had no intention to insult them by making them lift an old and non-descript bow—because this challenge was most formidable as the bow was not an ordinary old and rusty one but that which belonged to Lord Shiva, and one which even two formidable demon kings, Ravana and Banasur, had dared not touch—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 250.

As for the matchless beauty and charm of Sita, she personified these virtues themselves—refer: Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that have been narrated above.

Hence, the reward as well as the challenge was most appropriate for and befitting the stature of great kings. So, what was the problem?

Does it mean that no one could match the high standards of gallantry, valour, strength and power that Janak had envisioned in his mind to be the quality of the person who would be eligible as a groom for his beloved daughter Sita when he decided to hold this competition to find such a person? Well, as the things stood, it appears that this is the case, that it is the truth. The earth seems to lack ‘true warriors’; those who declare themselves as being strong and invincible are in fact pretentious and boastful, having nothing in substance. All of the kings are hollow balloons, and shame to them!!]

अब जनि कोउ माखै भट मानी । बीर बिहीन मही मैं जानी ॥ ३ ॥

aba jani kō'u mākhai bhaṭa mānī. bīra bihīna mahī mair̥ jānī. 3.

Let no warrior show any signs of anger and a wish for revenge now at this stage (because equal opportunity was given to all, and the formidable nature of the bow was also disclosed in clear terms by my heralds¹).

Don't get angry when I say that now I have realized that the earth is devoid of a real gallant warrior who can be said to possess the grand qualities of strength, power and valour that are expected from him. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Janak was a wise and elderly king; he had sensed the simmering signs of revenge by the demeanours of the defeated kings.

Janak said, in effect, that in spite of the explicit warning that this bow belonged to Lord Shiva, and that Ravana and Banasur (the two demon warriors renowned the world over for their matchless strength and abilities as they had easily lifted two huge mountains known as Kailash and Meru which were the abodes of Lord Shiva and the gods respectively, a feat that is not a joke, had refrained from even touching the bow what to talk of attempting to lift it), all the kings paid no heed and boldly dared to lift the bow. Therefore, they have no moral ground to accuse Janak of employing any sort of deceit or subterfuge to insult and humiliate them in open court.

Janak also said that all of them were well aware of the nature of the competition and the reward that was to be given. They weren't ignorant of anything; nothing was hidden from them. They had known that it was Shiva's bow and that the reward would be marriage with Janak's daughter Sita when invitations were sent to all corners of the earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251 with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

So, the defeated kings and princes had no ground to vent their frustration for defeat by rising in revolt and creating an unsavoury scene now.

He was very angry for another reason also—he had watched with alarm, indignation and utter disgust when “ten thousand kings” had tried to move the bow simultaneously--refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 251. How horrible, immoral and incredulous it was for a father to even imagine that in the unfortunate eventuality that they succeeded in moving and breaking the bow together, he would be forced to marry his daughter to all these mad and pervert men who were no less than personified greedy-and-lustful demons in the guise of kings.

So, Janak now sternly rebukes them without any reservation or mincing words. This made the defeated kings more ashamed of themselves. As we shall read a little later, they did rise in revolt to avenge their humiliation in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 266 below.]

तजहु आस निज निज गृह जाहू । लिखा न बिधि बैदेहि बिबाहू ॥ ४ ॥
सुकृत्तु जाइ जौं पनु परिहरऊँ । कुअँरि कुआरि रहउ का करऊँ ॥ ५ ॥

tajahu āsa nija nija gr̥ha jāhū. likhā na bidhi baidēhi bibāhū. 4.
sukṛtu jā'i jaum panu parihara'ūṁ. ku'am̐ri ku'āri raha'u kā kara'ūṁ. 5.

Abandon all hopes (of marrying Sita) now, and go back home. [I am not going to rescind on my vows. So don't think that I will contemplate upon any alternative arrangement to get my daughter married. It is unthinkable for me. Therefore, it is futile for all of you to wait here in my kingdom any longer in the hope of marrying Sita by other means. You better go back to your kingdoms as early as possible.]

It looks that Vidhi (Creator) had not written in the destiny of Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of the king of Videha, king Janak) that she would be married. [In other words, it is Sita's destiny that she will remain unmarried for the rest of her life. The Creator hadn't wanted her to marry. So be it; I can't change her destiny.] (4)

If I abandon my vows I will invite scorn, ignominy and infamy as a person who is not trustworthy and one who breaks his vows, for it is said in all sooth that the word of a noble king is his bond. [An honourable king is expected to live up to his words no matter what happens. This is a noble character in all great kings; there is nothing more sinful and ignominious for a king than breaking his own word and going back on his declarations.¹]

Therefore, I can't help it now if the princess (Sita) remains unmarried; I am helpless as I can't do anything at this stage. (5)

[Note--¹The same thing is said about king Dasrath of Ayodhya, the honourable father of Lord Ram, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28. However, the context here is absolutely different. Queen Kaikeyi wanted to make her son Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, as the king of Ayodhya instead of Ram who was the eldest of the four brothers and was planned to be anointed on the throne by his father, Dasrath, soon. So she threw tantrums and invoked two promises that her husband had made to her in some distant past but were still pending to be implemented. She had doubts that the king would not keep his vows, so she wanted an assurance or guarantee from him. It was at this time that Dasrath had said that “it is an established tradition amongst members of king Raghu's dynasty to which he belonged that they would gladly lay their lives but not break their own words, that there is no greater sin than speaking a lie or denying the truth”.

The same idea is being expressed by Janak here. He would prefer to see his beloved daughter remain unmarried than going back on his words and inviting ridicule and infamy for all times to come.]

जौं जनतेउँ बिनु भट भुबि भाई । तौ पनु करि होतेउँ न हँसाई ॥ ६ ॥

jaum janatē'um' binu bhaṭa bhubi bhāī. tau panu kari hōtē'um' na haṁsāī. 6.

Oh brothers! Had I known that the earth is devoid of real warriors (i.e. 'warrior kings'), I wouldn't have made this vow (that Sita would be married to anyone who breaks Lord Shiva's bow) and become a butt of laughter and ridicule in this world.' (6)

[Note—Janak literally said that all of you are impotent. A warrior who lacks strength and can't even move an old rusty bow is no better than an impotent man.]

After all the diatribe, Janak has used the affable term "brothers" ('Bhaai') to assuage ruffled feelings and soothen tempers amongst the kings when he scolded and rebuked them in stern words. "Brothers" is a polite mode of address, and Janak intended to convey the message that despite whatever that has happened he harbours no ill-will against any of the kings. They and he are brothers belonging to the same fraternity of great kings. So they should not harbour any animosity against him. They must understand the pain and grief in his heart as a father who has to face the bleak future of his daughter staring at his face.

This word "brother" has been used by Janak in his concluding sentence, implying that he has nothing more to speak.]

जनक बचन सुनि सब नर नारी । देखि जानकिहि भए दुखारी ॥ ७ ॥

janaka bacana suni saba nara nārī. dēkhi jānakihi bha'ē dukhārī. 7.

Hearing these deeply agonized words of Janak lamenting the dark future of his daughter Sita, all the assembled men and women looked at her (Sita) and felt very sorry for her; they felt very sad and hurt for her in their hearts. (7)

[Note—When the assembled citizens heard that Janak would not make an alternative arrangement to marry Sita as declared by him above, they were overwhelmed with gloom and sorrows. Initially they may have thought that in case none is able to break the bow, then in that eventuality Janak would implement some alternative arrangement that he must have had planned before hand in his mind. Any wise man would always have alternatives ready in case the main plan fails. But Janak was so confident that surely the Creator must have readied some suitable groom for Sita because he, the Creator, can't be so cruel as to force a girl to remain unmarried for life. His (Janak's) job was just to trace the designated groom decided for Sita by the Creator. He had no inkling of what was to come.]

As we shall see soon, Janak was not wrong in this surmising. The Creator had indeed decided a groom for Sita, and that groom was Lord Ram. So obviously, how could the Creator let others break the bow and marry Sita? But being a human being after all, Janak was not aware of certain things, such as who would be Sita's groom as decided by the Creator.

We have a lesson to learn here. We accuse our destiny and our God for all the ills that befall us during the course of our lives. When we face some problem we lament that God

is not listening to us or is stone-hearted. It is not that at all: we must have trust and faith in the Lord's overall intention of ensuring our welfare like a loving Father should. Times of misery and pain and grief in life are the tests of our faith and love and trust in the Lord our Father. Who would not like to pass in any test that he is subjected to? We do our best to pass this and that test in the world to qualify for this or that post, but we fail in the 'great test' of life when we lose our confidence, faith, love and devotion in our Lord, the Supreme Father! We can trust our worldly father for doing us well and helping us when we need him, but the great irony is we doubt our Supreme Father.

A very remarkable thing is to be observed here. While all the men and women, along with king Janak, his queen and the rest of his family (refer: Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 256) were overcome with sorrows and grief, Sita, who should have been the one most distressed and grieving as she was directly affected, showed no emotions or signs of grief when none of the kings were able to break the bow. Why was this? The reason is that she hadn't wanted to marry any one of them in the first place. In fact, she must have given a sigh of relief that now she wouldn't be forced to marry any of the kings against her will.

From the very beginning she had a desire in her heart to marry Lord Ram, and this fact has been repeatedly said in many previous verses. [Refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 248.] Therefore, she must have felt relieved when her father king Janak declared all the kings defeated. She knew that sage Vishwamitra, who was a great sage with tremendous mystical powers, would surely do something now because Lord Ram had yet not gone to the bow.

Further, besides this, she remembered the blessings of goddess Parvati in the garden temple when she had blessed her that she would get the groom of her choice. [Refer: Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and the accompanying Chanda.]

So, Sita stood assured that whatever has happened would be for her good. There was nothing to worry.]

माखे लखनु कुटिल भइँ भौँहें । रदपट फरकत नयन रिसौहें ॥ ८ ॥

mākhē lakhanu kuṭila bha'im' bhaunhēm. radapaṭa pharakata nayana risaunhēm.
8.

Laxman got incensed (by the words of Janak). His eyebrows narrowed and his forehead furrowed as his eyes spit fire and lips quivered in anger and indignation. (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza nos. 8-9 also.

Laxman got very angry because Janak had said that "the earth is devoid of true warrior kings". Why and how dare he utter such insulting words when they, he himself and his elder brother Ram who themselves belonged to a famous warrior family of Ayodhya, were personally present in the assembly? They hadn't been given a chance, and therefore such blanket condemnation of all kings as being impotent and lacking strength is uncalled for and unjustified. So Laxman took umbrage at the statement of Janak.]

दो०. कहि न सकत रघुबीर डर लगे बचन जनु बान ।

नाइ राम पद कमल सिरु बोले गिरा प्रमान ॥ २५२ ॥

dōhā.

kahi na sakata raghubīra ḍara lagē bacana janu bāna.
nā'i rāma pada kamala siru bōlē girā pramāna. 252.

He (Laxman) wanted to retort and rebuke Janak for making such insulting general statements without thinking. Though Janak's scathing words hit him like arrows, yet he could not speak out of fear of annoying Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty).

So, he first bowed at the lotus-like (holy) feet of Lord Ram (to seek his permission; to imply that he be forgiven for what he was about to say to defend the honour of their family). Then he spoke truthful words. [That is, whatever Laxman said was not boastful, but matter of fact.] (Doha no. 252.)

[Note—Laxman always showed the greatest of respect for his elder brother Lord Ram. Whenever any development happened which may, even remotely, be insulting for his revered Lord, Laxman stood up in arms to protect him and defend his dignity. We shall read about this nature of Laxman at many places in the story of Ramayan later on.

Meanwhile, Laxman hesitated to stand up and rebuke Janak because he was the latter was his host and a great respected king. Any father whose daughter faced the bleak future that Sita now purportedly faced would make him emotionally upset and lose his mental balance and calm. Laxman also observed that not all the invited kings had participated in the lifting of the bow; some had completely abstained—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246. These kings had not objected to Janak's caustic outburst.

So, Laxman initially felt a little constrained and could not decide whether to speak or not, lest his anger may annoy Lord Ram. The Lord may get angry at him for speaking unnecessarily instead of keeping quiet in a dignified manner. It is not good manners to speak angrily against the host, especially when the latter is not at fault, is speaking in a general manner without targeting any individual in particular, and is a noble king no less great than their own father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya.

Wouldn't it be more decent if Laxman just stands up, raises his hand and seeks permission either for himself or his brother to go to the bow, lift it and break it, instead of spouting fire and brimstone?

So, Laxman politely sought permission from Lord Ram before he spoke.

One very significant observation can be made here—Laxman has sought permission from Lord Ram, but not from sage Vishwamitra. This is because he knew that if Lord Ram gives him permission then it is deemed that he must have taken prior approval from the sage. Orders are taken through a chain of command: the junior takes permission from his immediate superior, and the latter in turn takes permission from the person higher up in the hierarchy. Therefore, Laxman would seek permission from Lord Ram, and the latter would then ask sage Vishwamitra if he gives his consent.

And therefore, for all practical purposes, as far as Laxman was concerned, permission from Lord Ram meant permission from the great sage too, because Lord Ram would never give his consent for anything for which the sage does not approve.

The fact that Laxman then spoke out his mind in the strongest of terms is a proof that both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra approved of it.

But we shall also read below that in his anger and zest to defend the honour and dignity of his race, and more importantly of his revered Lord Ram, sometimes he crossed the limits of dignity and politeness while pouring scorn at Janak. At those times Lord Ram had to intervene to restrain Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

The reader is requested to see note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254 below which further explains this Doha in another context.]

चौ०. रघुबंसिन्ह महँ जहँ कोउ होई । तेहिं समाज अस कहइ न कोई ॥ १ ॥
कही जनक जसि अनुचित बानी । बिद्यमान रघुकुल मनि जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

raghubansinha mahum' jaham' kō'u hō'ī. tēhim samāja asa kaha'i na kō'ī. 1.
kahī janaka jasi anucita bānī. bidyamāna raghukula mani jānī. 2.

Laxman spoke in a scathing language, pouring fire and brimstone: ‘No one dares to speak in the way it has been spoken (by Janak) anywhere in an assembly where any member of the Raghu dynasty is present. (1)

It is totally unacceptable the way Janak has blatantly spoken unwarranted and insulting words inspite of being aware (knowing well) that the gem of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram, the best warrior of this line of kings) is present here (in the assembly). (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza nos. 8-9 also which describe Laxman’s strong retort to Janak.

Laxman took exceptional offence of the unilateral declaration of Janak that “he has discovered that the earth is devoid of real warriors, that all the kings were impotent, and had he known of this he wouldn’t have made his vow (of marrying Sita to anyone who breaks the bow)” —refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 6 that precede Doha no. 252.

The reason for Laxman getting angry is obvious—none of the two brothers were given a chance to try their hands at the bow. Self-respect and honour of the family were affected by this remark of Janak though the king had not meant to insult any particular king or prince and his family or race.

By saying “any member of the Raghu dynasty”, Laxman meant that even an ordinary member of this line of kings and princes was capable of tackling an old and rusty bow, what to talk of the better amongst them. In the present case, Lord Ram, who is a literal “gem of the Raghu dynasty”, was personally present in the assembly. So Janak was totally unjustified in making this undignified comment; it’s not acceptable.

Janak was fully aware of the stupendous abilities and astounding powers of Lord Ram because he was explicitly told by sage Vishwamitra about the Lord’s brave achievements and martial acumen when he had successfully killed the demoness Tadaka and the entire army of demons led by its chief Subhau while protecting the fire sacrifice of the sage. Janak was also fully aware that they were the sons of king Dasrath of Ayodhya who belonged to Raghu dynasty. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with the preceding Chaupai line no. 8. So, Janak can’t feign ignorance that he did not who Lord Ram was, and therefore he shouldn’t have made the insulting comments without inviting the Lord to try his luck at the bow.]

सुनहु भानुकुल पंकज भानू । कहउँ सुभाउ न कछु अभिमानू ॥ ३ ॥

sunahu bhānukula pañkaja bhānū. kaha'um' subhā'u na kachu abhimānū. 3.

[Then Laxman turned to Lord Ram and said--] Listen oh Lord who is like the sun for the lotus representing the Raghu dynasty¹. I speak words without any trace of pride and ego in me². (3)

[Note—¹Here, the Raghu dynasty is compared to the lotus flower, and Lord Ram to the sun. The lotus flower opens when the sun rises in the sky. This metaphor implies that Lord Ram gives honour and self-respect to all the members of his dynasty, he makes all of them feel happy and joyous by his presence, and they feel lucky to have him in their midst as a member of this dynasty.

In fact, this metaphor is most apt here because all the kings of the Raghu dynasty belonged to the 'Solar Race'; they descended from the Sun God.

²In other words Laxman says "I am not boasting, and what I am about to say are truthful words. I will actually do what I say, and I will turn this earth upside down to avenge this insult cast upon you by Janak." Read on and let's see in the following verses what Laxman would do.]

जौं तुझारि अनुसासन पावौं । कंदुक इव ब्रह्मांड उठावौं ॥ ४ ॥

काचे घट जिमि डारौं फोरी । सकउँ मेरु मूलक जिमि तोरी ॥ ५ ॥

jaur̥ tumhāri anusāsana pāvaum̐. kanduka iva brahmāṇḍa uṭhāvaum̐. 4.
kācē ghaṭa jimi ḍāraum̐ phōrī. saka'um' mēru mūlaka jimi tōrī. 5.

If I get your (Lord Ram's) permission, I will lift the entire universe ("brahmāṇḍa") as if it was a mere ball [4], and then I will dash it and break it like a mud-pot that has not been baked properly¹.

Not only this, I can uproot and break Mt. Meru (the abode of gods) as if it was the humble radish² [5]. (4-5)

[Note—Laxman was indeed not boasting because he was an incarnation of 'Lord Seshnath', the celestial serpent with thousand hoods who is said to support the world from below aloft these hoods. He is also the serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean known as 'Kshir Sagar'. In this role, Seshnath protects Vishnu by spreading his thousand hoods on the head of the Lord.

This Seshnath had accompanied Lord Vishnu to help the latter to eliminate the evil demons and free the earth of their horrors. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17; and (ii) Doha no. 197.

¹The universe is like a rounded ball or egg. It is especially compared to a "ball" here for the reason that it cannot be so easily broken just like the rubber ball which does not break no matter how hard one dashes it against the ground. But it can be easily lifted like the ball. So, when saying how he will break such a universe, Laxman cites the example of a half-baked mud or clay pot. The latter would crumble to pieces as soon as it dropped on the ground.

Therefore, Laxman meant that he would lift the entire universe as if it was a ball, and then break it as if it was a mud pot.

This example was to answer Janak's condition about "lifting" and "breaking" the bow of Lord Shiva which was supposed to be the heaviest and hardest thing in the whole

world. It is clear in the declaration of the heralds that this bow was “very strong” and “heavy”. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that precede Doha no. 250.

Laxman in effect says that “What to talk of the rusty old bow; I can lift and break the entire universe”.

²As for the metaphor of the “uprooting and breaking Mt. Meru like it was a piece of radish”, Laxman was referring to Janak’s comment that none of the kings could move the bow even a fraction of an inch what to talk of lifting it and breaking it. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 252.

Well, Laxman said in effect that “If he got a chance, he would pull the bow out of its platform like one pulls out radish from the ground, and then snap the bow in one sweeping move of the hand as easily as one breaks the radish”.]

तव प्रताप महिमा भगवाना । को बापुरो पिनाक पुराना ॥ ६ ॥

tava pratāpa mahimā bhagavānā. kō bāpurō pināka purānā. 6.

Oh Lord (Sri Ram)! What is this wretched old and rusty bow when it is compared to your immense glory and potentials! [That is, if I invoke your divine glories and mystical powers and apply them on this petty bow, it won’t stand even a trifle of a chance to oppose me, and would splinter into smithereens like broken glass pieces.] (6)

[Note—Laxman has said in Chaupai line no. 3 that follows Doha no. 252 above that “he is not saying anything out of ego or false pride”. In other words, Laxman is not concerned about his own honour, dignity and self-respect being rubbed the wrong way, but he is angry because his beloved brother and Lord, Sri Ram, has been insulted by the words of Janak. That is why he clarifies in this verse any misunderstanding that may rise in the mind of anyone present in the assembly—that “he is annoyed because the glory of Lord Ram is questioned; he is angry because an old bow is used as an excuse to undermine the greatness of Lord Ram as well as the rest of the kings of the famous Raghu dynasty which is renowned for brave and strong kings”.]

नाथ जानि अस आयसु होऊ । कौतुकु करौं बिलोकिअ सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥

कमल नाल जिमि चाप चढ़ावौं । जोजन सत प्रमान लै धावौं ॥ ८ ॥

nātha jāni asa āyasu hō'ū. kautuku karaurñ bilōki'a sō'ū. 7.

kamala nāla jimi cāpa caṛhāvaumñ. jōjana sata pramāna lai dhāvaumñ. 8.

Oh Lord! Think this over, and treating it as an honest declaration on my part (to preserve the dignity of our race), please give me your permission and watch the fantastic spectacle that unfolds before you. (7)

[What would be this spectacle like? Well—] I will lift the bow and string it as easily as it was a soft and light stalk of the lotus flower, and then I will run gleefully with it for a distance of a thousand Yojan as a proof (“Pramaan”) of the truth of my statements (all the while waving the bow triumphantly like one waves a flag of victory). [1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles on an average.] (8)

[Note—Laxman assured Lord Ram that once he is given a nod of approval, he will lift the bow, string it, and then go around the world waving it like a flag to triumphantly

declare to everyone that he has conquered the bow, and through it in a symbolic manner the combined might of arms of all the great kings of the world who could not as much as move the same bow an inch despite their trying to do so together.

The imagery is excellent. When a team wins any competition, it runs round the stadium with the flag of the country it represents as a symbol of triumph. Laxman meant exactly this. The assembled kings and princes had come from all the corners of the world (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251), but none of them had succeeded in moving the bow, either individually or together (Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 252). This is followed by Janak's declaration that no one has succeeded in moving the bow, and that the earth is devoid of true warriors (Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 252).

Laxman wanted to tell the world that Janak's declaration is wrong and false. In order to convince the world that it is indeed so, and that he has actually lifted the bow and stringed it, it was necessary for Laxman to "run around the world and declare his triumph by physically carrying the stringed bow with him so that the people can see it as a proof, and be convinced". Otherwise, the world would think that Laxman was merely boasting because king Janak, who was renowned for his truthfulness, can't speak a lie.]

दो०. तोरौं छत्रक दंड जिमि तव प्रताप बल नाथ ।

जौं न करौं प्रभु पद सपथ कर न धरौं धनु भाथ ॥ २५३ ॥

dōhā.

tōraurñ chatraka daṇḍa jimi tava pratāpa bala nātha.

jaum na karaum prabhu pada sapatha kara na dharaum dhanu bhātha. 253.

Oh Lord, not only this. If I get your permission I would break this bow (effortlessly) like it was a stalk of a mushroom by relying on the strength of your glory and might¹.

If, on the other hand, I fail to do so, then I swear (promise) in the name of your holy feet that I will not hold a bow and a quiver in my hands again (for the rest of my life)! (Doha no. 253)

[Note—Two things are important in this Doha. First is Laxman's declaration that he can break the bow if Lord Ram permits. In other words, the Lord need not take this trouble and leave it to Laxman. Able ministers or army commanders would tell their Lord, the Emperor or the King, not to bother about small inconsequential things as they are capable to handle them on their own. The Emperor or the King should intervene when they fail.

Similarly, Laxman meant that this menial and inconsequential job of lifting and breaking a rusty old bow does not suit the stature of the majesty of Lord Ram that he should personally go and touch this dusty bow. The Lord should remain sitting and just instruct Laxman to carry out the job for him on his behalf. This is how great Kings and Emperors acted: they rarely intervened personally but left the mundane affairs of the kingdom or empire to their subordinate ministers or commanders.

Laxman deemed fit to make this statement to remove any traces of doubts in the mind of all that it was not that he can only "lift and string the bow" but won't be able to actually "break it".

The second point is that Laxman did not wish to undermine the greatness and authority of Lord Ram by overstepping him, and breaking the bow himself instead of the Lord. Laxman wished to make it clear that his breaking of the bow was not due to his

own powers and strength but due to the powers and authority vested in him by Lord Ram. It is similar to the situation when ministers and commanders of a king or emperor carry out their duties independently, but they do it on behalf of their master, the king or the emperor. That is why the spoils of war were deemed to rightly belong to the king and not to the army commanders. Similarly, the credit for good governance went to the king and not to his ministers who were supposed to act anonymously on behalf of the king.

Since the marriage of Sita was hitched to the breaking of the bow, it was very imperative for Laxman to declare that “he is breaking the bow not by his own volition or strength but on the instructions of Lord Ram and by employing the latter’s mystical powers”. Therefore, the reward—marriage with Sita—would be Lord Ram’s and not Laxman’s!]

चौ०. लखन सकोप बचन जे बोले । डगमगानि महि दिग्गज डोले ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

lakhana sakōpa bacana jē bōlē. ḍagamagāni mahi diggaja ḍōlē. 1.

When Laxman spoke words seething with anger, the earth shook and the Diggajs moved (shifted) from their places and tottered. (1)

[Note—These two things—shaking of the earth and moving of the Diggajs—are figures of speech to mean that there was a huge turmoil in the world as if some catastrophe was about to happen.

Remember: Laxman is an incarnation of the Seshnath who supports the world on its ten thousand hoods (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17), and therefore if Laxman becomes angry and shakes his head violently the earth is bound to tremble as if there was an earthquake.

The ‘Diggajs’ are the eight strong elephants that support the earth in all the directions. Since there are eight directions, there are said to be eight ‘Diggajs’. These eight directions are as follows—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, and north-west. See also Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 260.

So, when Seshnath in the form of Laxman shook his head in anger, the earth as well as its supporting elephants too shook and trembled. This is a poetic way of saying that Laxman’s words were exceedingly scathing and he spoke at the top of his voice in a wrathful tone.]

सकल लोग सब भूप डेराने । सिय हियँ हरषु जनकु सकुचाने ॥ २ ॥

sakala lōga saba bhūpa ḍērānē. siya hiyaṁ haraṣu janaku sakucānē. 2.

Everyone present there in the assembly, the citizens as well as the kings, became terrified. But Sita’s heart, on the other hand, felt happy and joyous (as this was the moment she was waiting for, because now either of the two brothers would be allowed to

break the bow, and her dreams would not be crushed¹), while king Janak blushed (became red-faced) at this strong rejoinder. (2)

[Note—¹Sita was earlier worried when her father, king Janak, had virtually declared the competition over when he said that since no one could break the bow he will now have to bear with the ignominy and pain of letting his daughter Sita unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 252.

She could not at all intervene and ask her father to let Lord Ram also try his hand at the bow—well, it would be absolutely ridiculous and incongruous for her to even think of personally speaking out. This is the irony of the situation as it prevailed in ancient tradition-bound society—the girl whose entire future was at stake did not get a chance to at least express her thoughts or voice her concern. It would be highly incongruous, very improper and certainly violative of established traditions and royal protocol if Sita did gather courage to speak out in public to request her father king Janak to ask Lord Ram to at least try his hand at lifting and breaking the bow because he had not been given a chance till now. She would have become a laughing stock everywhere in the world, and would not only invite utter scorn and infamy for her self but would also put her father to extreme shame.

Therefore, when Laxman angrily spoke that he is capable of lifting and breaking the bow if Lord Ram gives his permission to him to do so, and as a proof of his abilities there was a virtual earthquake, Sita felt very happy. She mentally blessed Laxman for rebuking her father because the latter had neglected Lord Ram before declaring that “no one could break the bow”, and the insulting general surmise that he made that “the earth was devoid of true warriors”. How could Janak use the phrase “no one” when Lord Ram or Laxman had yet not even gone to touch the bow?

Didn't the king know that these two brothers too belonged to a royal family of great repute, and didn't he personally like the two brothers that he wanted to avoid them, that he did not wish them to break the bow and marry Sita? Not at all—both these notions were wrong. For one, Janak was well aware who they were and how brave they were, as sage Vishwamitra had himself told him about them—refer: Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8. And secondly, Janak had himself taken a fascination for the two brothers and had been overwhelmed by their charm—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

So, to neglect Lord Ram and Laxman before declaring the competition closed and sealing the fate of Sita to remain unmarried was something Janak shouldn't have done, and naturally Sita was annoyed and angry with her father for it.

Perhaps the all-knowing and omniscient Lord Ram had sensed Sita's predicament and grief as well as her suppressed anger, and he knew that Sita sincerely wished to marry him—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259. The fact that Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient is endorsed at other places also in Ram Charit Manas—e.g. (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 66; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Therefore, Lord Ram must have subtly inspired Laxman to speak. Remember: If we examine Doha no. 252 of Baal Kand closely we discover that though Laxman did bow at the feet of Lord Ram to seek his permission before speaking, no explicit permission was given by the Lord. Lord Ram had neither said 'don't speak', nor said 'yes, go ahead'; the Lord had just kept quiet. This clearly implies that Laxman had his subtle, tacit support and approval. Laxman was very wise, and he was also privy to the developments in the garden when Lord Ram and Sita had met for the first time. The Lord had clearly expressed to Laxman his liking for and appreciation of Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 231 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (ii)

from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 238.

The above observations are also the probable reason why Laxman did not think necessary to seek an independent permission from sage Vishwamitra before angrily snubbing king Janak in open court.

The above observations that both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra subtly approved Laxman's actions will be clear below when we read Chaupai no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 that “both Lord Ram and Guru Vishwamitra, as well as the other junior sages who had accompanied Vishwamitra, felt exceptionally glad and happy in their hearts”. Had any one of them disapproved Laxman's words and actions then surely Laxman would not have dared to stand up and speak the way he did.

Janak squirmed with a red-face because Laxman was indeed speaking the truth. Janak realised that he should have requested sage Vishwamitra to ask Lord Ram, being the elder of the two brothers, to lift the bow. But he hadn't, and so when Laxman spoke angrily and the sage did not step-in to stop him, the king realised the gravity of the situation: he sensed that even sage Vishwamitra has not liked his declaring “the earth devoid of real warriors” and not even offering the chance to Lord Ram, especially when he knew that a mighty sage of Vishwamitra's status is accompanying him and the sage has himself told the king about the valour and stupendous powers of the two brothers when the king had gone to welcome the sage on his arrival at Janakpur—refer Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 earlier in this narration.

So Janak decided to bear this humiliation quietly. It was indeed a great humiliation for king Janak—who was one of the greatest kings of his time, was an aged man, and was the host of the event—to be publicly rebuked and taken to task by a young prince, in the front of the entire assembly full of kings and princes from all quarters of earth as well as by the entire citizenry of his own kingdom!

But so noble-hearted and broad-minded was the great king Janak that he did not feel offended or took any umbrage to Laxman's diatribe against him as he realised that it was his own mistake. If there would have been some other king in place of Janak, it is certain that he must have angrily shot back and ordered his soldiers to imprison this prince who dared to insult him in open court, is it not? Not only tolerating Laxman's public scorn, Janak was so forgiving by nature that he had later on married his own daughter, the sister of Sita, with Laxman—refer: Baal Kand, line nos. 1-2 of Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 325.]

गुर रघुपति सब मुनि मन माहीं । मुदित भए पुनि पुनि पुलकाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

gura raghupati saba muni mana māhīm. mudita bha'ē puni puni pulakāhīm. 3.

[At whatever Laxman said and as a result of this new development—] The Guru (i.e. sage Vishwamitra)*, Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty) as well as all other sages (who had accompanied Vishwamitra) felt exceedingly happy and exhilarated; their bodies showed signs of repeated thrill passing through them. (3)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 10 also.

As we have noted earlier while discussing verse no. 2 just above, the persons who fully approved of Laxman's actions were the following—Sita, Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra as well as the other sages who had accompanied Vishwamitra. As far as Laxman was concerned, this was enough; he didn't give a damn to anybody else.

One very important reason for all of them feeling glad in their hearts is this—even in his anger, Laxman had not undermined the majesty and dignity of Lord Ram. He had fully maintained the honour and respect of the Lord because he had clearly said that whatever he would actually do will be only “if Lord Ram gives his permission” (refer Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 253), and that “whatever he does would be by relying on the glory and powers of Lord Ram” so as to give the Lord full credit for his astounding feats (refer Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 253).

*If we re-visit the question ‘Why did Laxman not seek permission from sage Vishwamitra, though he sought so from Lord Ram before standing up and speaking angrily in the assembly’ as implied in Doha no. 252, and then we read here in the present verse that ‘the sage was happy at the developments’, an interesting thing emerges which shows how wise and long-thinking Laxman was. This interesting thing is this:—If Lord Ram gets the right to claim the reward of the breaking of the bow by Laxman, which in this case would be the marriage with Sita, because it was by relying upon Ram’s powers and authority that Laxman had been able to break it, then the same right would also belong to sage Vishwamitra if Laxman had sought any permission from the sage and had invoked his blessings and mystical powers to actually break the bow.

What does it translate into practical terms? Well, in this eventuality, both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra would have had ‘equal right’ over Sita like the case we come across in the epic Mahabharat where a single woman named Draupadi was the wife of five Pandava brothers. Remember that it was not that the sages during the era of Lord Ram did not have wives—for instance, sage Vasistha, the royal priest of Ayodhya and the first guru of Lord Ram, had a wife named Arundhati (refer: Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 78: and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 187), and sage Atri whom the Lord had met during his forest sojourn also had a wife named Anusuiya (refer: Aranya Kand—Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5). So, sage Vishwamitra having a wife would, *primia facia*, be alright.

But it also must be remembered at the same time that the situation during the era when Lord Ram was on earth, i.e. the Hindu epoch known as the ‘Treta Yug’, was quite different than what prevailed during Krishna’s period in ‘Dwapar Yug’. In Treta Yug it was simply unimaginable and unthinkable for a woman to have more than one husband, let alone one of them being a king and the other a sage! It would be extremely hilarious, absurd, scandalous, sacrilegious, outrageous and immoral to even speak of this thing. It just couldn’t be allowed to happen.

Therefore we find that Laxman was so wise that he did not want to create any embarrassing situation like the one described above, and so he decided to completely avoid the sage to prevent any sort of scandal getting a chance to find a root in any time in future. Hence he did not seek any permission from sage Vishwamitra and by-passed him altogether.

As the situation stood, if Laxman had indeed broken the bow, then he would have done so on behalf of Lord Ram because he was the only Authority from whom Laxman has sought permission. Hence, the reward of breaking of the bow, which was marriage with Sita, would go solely to Lord Ram, and the scandalous as well as the sacrilegious idea of sage Vishwamitra too having any right or claim to the reward would not arise at all!

The sage was extremely practical and wise, and having read into Laxman’s mind he not only not take any offence at not being consulted and taken permission from by Laxman before he launched on his angry outpouring, but even felt very happy at the turn of events as is clear in the present verse we have read above.]

सयनहिं रघुपति लखनु नेवारे । प्रेम समेत निकट बैठारे ॥ ४ ॥

sayanahim raghupati lakhanu nēvārē. prēma samēta nikaṭa baiṭhārē. 4.

Raghupati (Lord Ram) politely signalled Laxman by a gesture of his eyes to stop now¹. Then the Lord affectionately made him (or asked him to) sit near him. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 10 also.

Lord Ram restrained Laxman by gesturing with his eyes as a sign of great dignity. Remember: Lord Ram had not, in the beginning, given any oral permission to Laxman to get up and defend their dignity. So here also he quietly, with the help of a gesture of the eye, asked him to stop saying anything further because the message has already been conveyed, and speaking unnecessarily and too much would undermine their own dignity and prestige. The first volley of angry words created the shock and awe that the Lord intended to create, but any more speaking would not only undo the effect of this initial shock but also may make the people start laughing and jeering at Laxman.

The Lord also feared that if he does not stop Laxman then he would continue pouring fire and brimstone, and in his zest may even take the Lord's silence as a subtle, tacit approval for Laxman's announcement that he would "lift the bow and run for a thousand Yojan with it", and "break it" (refer—Doha no. 253 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8). If this happens, then the situation would spin out of control for everyone. It would be undermining the dignity of Lord Ram and would be against established protocol of good behaviour, decency, manners and observance of traditions that his younger brother supercedes him even when he is personally present on the occasion.

So it was very necessary for Lord Ram to stop Laxman now, before he actually moves ahead and steps on the platform where the bow was kept. Should it happen, it would be extremely odd as well as humiliating for Laxman to be stopped at that late stage. Hence, it was prudent to stop Laxman now before any harm is done, and before it was too late.

The fact that Vishwamitra gave his tacit approval and support will be absolutely beyond doubt as we read the following verses below--]

बिस्वामित्र समय सुभ जानी । बोले अति सनेहमय बानी ॥ ५ ॥

उठहु राम भंजहु भवचापा । मेटहु तात जनक परितापा ॥ ६ ॥

bisvāmitra samaya subha jānī. bōlē ati sanēhamaya bānī. 5.

uṭhahu rāma bhañjahu bhavacāpā. mēṭahu tāta janaka paritāpā. 6.

Observing that the time was most appropriate (i.e. the time has come for him to step-in and break the impasse), sage Vishwamitra spoke (to Lord Ram) in very affectionate words.¹ (5)

'Get up Ram and break the 'bhavacāpā'² (the bow belonging to Lord Shiva, also known as "Bhava") to remove (or eliminate) the torments and agony from which Janak is suffering.' (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 11 also.

The situation had become extremely sensitive: Laxman has violated protocol by making caustic comments against Janak, and he had also challenged that he is indeed

capable of breaking the bow only if Lord Ram gives his consent. Then Laxman was asked to sit down. The wise sage realized the gravity of the situation—if Lord Ram does not respond it will mean that Laxman had gone out of his head and that whatever he had said was totally boast and lie. The whole of the Raghu dynasty would be put to shame. What face would the sage show their father, king Dasrath, when this news reaches him and he feels so ashamed and angry at the sage that inspite of his presence he allowed such ignominy to come to the family. King Dasrath had sent his dear sons with the sage with full confidence that the sage is fully capable to protect them and would always act for their good and welfare. Why did the sage take the two brothers to Janakpur to be allowed to be humiliated in this way? The sage had only asked Dasrath to send the brothers with him to protect his fire sacrifice, and what right did he have to exceed his brief?

Forget about Dasrath; the entire world would laugh and sneer at Vishwamitra that he allowed shame and insult to be heaped on the two brothers who were under his care and protection inspite of the sage being fully able to make them victorious in the assembly as he possessed stupendous mystical powers? Is this the reward the sage intended to give the two brothers and king Dasrath, their father, for the sacrifices they had made and the trouble they had taken for the happiness and welfare of the sage? Well, the the king had allowed the two brothers to leave the comfort of the kingdom and go on foot to the forest to fight and kill ferocious demons so that the sage's fire sacrifice is completed without any hitch, a duty the two brothers did diligently and successfully?

Why didn't the sage ask Janak to at least let Lord Ram or Laxman make an attempt at breaking the bow, and why did he sat silently when Janak declared that there is no true warrior in the world because no one had been able to move the bow an inch?

The sage would get to more shame than anybody else when the world would ask him such questions. Sure enough, the world as well as the entire city of Ayodhya would blame him if he kept quiet and forced the two brothers to accept defeat even without trying. The situation has become all the more worse and delicate now as Laxman has angrily stood up and vented his suppressed emotions of disgust and annoyance. Couldn't the sage understand that the two brothers have felt very angry and betrayed by the sage for not giving them permission to defend their honour as well as the honour of their dynasty by keeping quiet? Couldn't the sage intercede on their behalf with Janak to allow one of them to break the bow—because he was their Guru and guardian, and therefore it was his moral and practical responsibility to see that their honour, self-respect and dignity are maintained and upheld, especially when the sage was fully capable of doing so? Couldn't the sage appreciate that the two brothers were showing great restraint and respect for him by not walking to the bow without his consent, like all other invited kings and princes had done, and therefore it was now his turn to stand up on their behalf?

Countless such questions swirled in the mind of Vishwamitra. It was not that he wasn't aware of his responsibility, not at all. In fact, he was very much aware of it and conscientious about it. He was more capable in enhancing the glory of Lord Ram and Laxman than their own father Dasrath could imagine of being himself. Remember: Had the two brothers not accompanied the sage and had remained in Ayodhya, then the immense fame and glory that came to them when they killed the most formidable of demons who were famed for their ferocity and bloodthirstyness wouldn't have been theirs. Remember also that by liberating Ahilya by touching her with the dust of his holy feet, Lord Ram had established his divine healing and liberating powers beyond doubt.

The sage had showed them the love a father would show his dearest of sons. The two brothers had also treated him with the same affection as they would show their own father. The bond between them transcended the physical world for it had a spiritual dimension to it. Remember: After returning from the garden, Lord Ram had narrated the entire incident of his meeting with Sita to the sage (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand,

Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237). At that time, the sage, having realized that Lord Ram and Sita had developed liking for each other, had explicitly blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237). After making this promise or blessing, the sage took them to the arena of the bow breaking ceremony. The sage was not a child; he knew where he was taking the two brothers. The sage was 'Trikaalagya'—i.e. one who knew the events of the past, the future as well as the present. He wouldn't have either blessed them that "their wishes would be fulfilled" nor would he have taken them to the ceremony if he had known that Lord Ram would not break the bow.

Again, the sage wouldn't have felt happy when Laxman stood up to sternly rebuke king Janak (as narrated above in Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8). The sage was not so utterly selfish or devoid of common and moral sense that after getting his work of completing the fire sacrifice done he would bring the two honourable brothers, who had obliged him no end, to Janakpur to be humiliated and dishonoured in this way.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that the sage "was waiting for an opportune moment to make his announcement". And this moment came now after Laxman had declared their presence in strongly-worded terms.

Now, the next question is: Why was the sage waiting for so long? He wanted the whole assembly to focus its attention on Lord Ram and Laxman, he wanted to dramatise Lord Ram's appearance on the stage, he wanted to give the Lord the importance, the prominence and the dominance he deserved, he wished that the Lord is presented to the world as the saviour and the provider of solace and succour at times of utter despair and hopelessness, he did not want the Lord's presence and glory to get lost in the melee of over-jealous kings pushing and shoving each other and loudly boasting of their own strength by throwing all caution and decency to the wind, he did not, in short, want the dignity and honour of Lord Ram be compromised in anyway whatsoever.

Hence, when the sage quietly observed the restless, boastful, over-jealous and excited crowd of kings and princes vying with each other in the beginning of the competition, he decided to exercise restraint and let the storm pass. He did not wish to undermine Lord Ram's supreme stature, honour and dignity by allowing him to join an uncontrolled motley crowd of haughty and egoist kings and princes, sweating and swearing, jostling, pushing, shoving and cursing each other. In this scenario, even if Lord Ram had broken the bow, this singularly marvelous achievement and its significance would have been lost in the shouting and shoving, in the noise and clamour.

After all the kings failed to move the bow, a pall of gloom had descended on the arena. When Janak spoke, there was a complete grave-like silence of shame, defeat and humiliation. In this deathly gloom, Laxman's angry words struck like lightening, waking the entire assembly from the depth of numbness of the mind into which it had sunk. Everyone sat erect on their seats and craned their necks in the direction of the two brothers just like people look up at the sky when lightening streaks through it with a terrifying whiplash-of-a-sound against the background of dark foreboding clouds. And just after this thundering and lightening it is the time when the rain starts pouring down on the parched earth, quenching the thirst of its creatures.

So, metaphorically speaking, this was the time the wise sage selected to make his announcement that he is sending Lord Ram to remove the agony and grief in the heart of Janak, and by implication, of the rest of the citizens as well as of Sita by breaking the bow—just like the case of the rain-God, Indra, ordering the cloud to pour its soothing and cool rain-water upon the earth soon after the lightening alerts the world to be ready for this nectar which is about to be made available to them in a short time!

The moment that the sage selected was dramatic and effective in highlighting Lord Ram's astounding feat. It also effortlessly settled once and for all who actually broke the bow. Remember: At the time Lord Ram went on stage to the bow, the place was completely empty; there was not a single king or prince standing anywhere near the bow. The same place was over-crowded a while ago; there were "thousands of competing kings there"—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.

So, Lord Ram would be the undisputed victor. No one would ever dare to challenge his victory by saying that someone else had broken the bow and he is being given undue credit because it was not possible to determine in a huge crowd of jostling kings and princes who had 'actually' broken the bow. This question did not arise now when the stage was empty.

Another positive spin-off of this moment would be that all the citizens of Janakpur as well as the royal household would be thankful to the sage and obliged to Laxman to create a situation that enabled Lord Ram to go and break the bow to save the truthful king Janak from the agony and humiliation that he would have had to suffer otherwise for being steadfast to his vows. Janak has himself already declared that he "will have to bear with the infamy and agony of seeing his daughter remain unmarried because he does not wish to gain notoriety and sin by breaking his own vows" (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252).

Therefore, in the event that Lord Ram breaks the bow now after the king has openly declared his pain and helplessness would make the king not only the happiest person on earth but also make him remain ever-obliged to the Lord as well as to the sage, and thankful to Laxman too, for saving him from the horrifying ignominy of being instrumental in forcing his innocent, hapless and helpless daughter to remain unmarried against her will because of his adamant vows and outlandish ideas.

The sage had wanted to declare to the world the glory of the Raghu dynasty as a token of thanksgiving to king Dasrath who had sent his beloved sons, Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage to help him complete his fire sacrifice. And for this purpose it was necessary to choose an appropriate moment. And the opportunity arrived when Janak declared that the "earth was devoid of real warriors". This incensed Laxman. The wise sage was observing things closely, and when he saw signs of suppressed anger on Laxman's face, he decided to give a silent go-ahead to him. So he inspired Laxman to get up and speak to defend the honour and glory of the Raghu dynasty. Remember: As has been made clear earlier in a note of Doha no. 252 and again in a note to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 above, that Laxman would not have spoken so angrily if he knew that the sage would not approve. This explains why Laxman had his way with his angry outburst which lauded the glory of the Raghu dynasty—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 253 above.

²The word "Bhava" has two broad meanings—one refers to 'Lord Shiva' because it is one of the many names of the Lord, and the other meaning refers to the agony one suffers in this mortal world of an endless cycle of birth and death, a world held under the spell of Maya (attachments and delusions).

The second word "Chaap" again has two meanings—one obviously refers to the 'bow of Lord Shiva', and the other meaning is 'pressure or tension' of this world which keeps the creature's happiness and liberation suppressed under the overwhelming weight of pain and agony that are inherent and a natural part of existence.

So, at a very mundane and ordinary plane Lord Ram was asked by sage Vishwamitra to break the bow of Lord Shiva and remove the cause of agony of king Janak that his daughter would have to remain unmarried because of it.

At a higher spiritual plane, the sage asked the 'Lord of the World' to get up and ensure that all his devotees get happiness and bliss by singing his glories and divine deeds that he does in this world so that their spiritual miseries are taken care of.]

सुनि गुरु बचन चरन सिरु नावा । हरषु बिषादु न कछु उर आवा ॥ ७ ॥
ठाढ़े भए उठि सहज सुभाएँ । ठवनि जुबा मृगराजु लजाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

sunī guru bacana carana siru nāvā. haraṣu biṣādu na kachu urā āvā. 7
ṭhārḥē bha'ē uṭhi sahaja subhā'ēm̃. ṭhavani jubā mṛgarāju lajā'ēm̃. 8.

Upon hearing the words (or rather, 'instructions') of his Guru (sage Vishwamitra), he (Lord Ram) bowed his head at his feet (as a mark of respect and acceptance).

The Lord was without any sort of emotions—he neither felt happy and joyous nor sorrowful; he exhibited neither excitement nor hesitation or doubt.¹ (7)

He stood up in a natural way (without being self-conscious and showing any sign of excitement or nervousness, especially when thousands of eyes of the assembled people were focused on him). As he stood there, he looked so elegant, majestic and magnificent that he put to shame a young lion who is the king of the forest.² (8)

[Note—¹This was the special quality of Lord Ram which we find throughout the story of the Ramayana. The Lord remained unruffled, and the excitement accompanying any good news, or worry arising from any bad news, did not disturb his mental poise. For instance, when he learnt about the bad news that he was banished to the forest for 14 year exile by his step-mother Kaikeyi by forcing king Dasrath to concede to her outrageous demands, the Lord remained calm and showed no anger or ill-will towards any one. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 51 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 149.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12 in which the gods have acknowledged this well-established divine quality in Lord Ram; (ii) Baal Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 270 which describes how Lord Ram responded politely and without fear or arrogance to sage Parashuram when he came angrily to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow.

Feelings of joy and sorrow are the emotions of ordinary mortal creatures, and not who are divine and self-realised—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 116. Lord Ram was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and thus he was beyond the effects of sorrows and happiness.

²The lion does not treat any challenge in the forest as deserving any special attention. As the king of the forest, it is natural for it to hunt down even the wild elephant that all other animals fear because of its sheer size and strength. Likewise, Lord Ram stood up majestically, and his bearing was elegant.]

दो०. उदित उदयगिरि मंच पर रघुबर बालपतंग ।
बिकसे संत सरोज सब हरषे लोचन भृंग ॥ २५४ ॥

dōhā.

udita udayagiri mañca para raghubara bālapataṅga.
bikasē santa sarōja saba haraṣē lōcana bhr̥ṅga. 254.

As Raghubhar (the brave chief of the kings of the Raghu dynasty) rose elegantly from his seat (to carry out the instructions of the sage), he resembled a sun rising majestically over the ‘Udaigiri’ Mountain (the legendary mountain above which the sun appears to rise) in the eastern horizon.¹

Even as the lotus feels happy when the sun rises (as is evident from its beginning to open its petals as soon as the sun emerges over the horizon), and the blackbee too feels joyous (as it begins to buzz enthusiastically over the flower in search of nectar), the saints and other noble-hearted persons present there felt themselves happy and joyous much like the lotus flower, their eyes opening wide to exhibit their excitement and exhilaration even as they became lively and active (to watch each and every move of Lord Ram) just like the blackbee hovering over the lotus flower with expectation in its heart.² (Doha no. 254)

[Note—¹A dark pall of gloom and despair had descended over the assembly after none of the kings could move the bow, and king Janak made his determination clear that he is not going to change his vow inspite of that meaning that his daughter, Sita, would have to remain unmarried.

Everyone in the assembly, the citizens as well as the members of the royal household, had expected that Sita would be married on this occasion—because they could not have guessed, even in their wildest of dreams, that with thousands of strong and brave warrior kings and princes from all the corners of the earth assembled there and determined to break the bow, none would be able to as much as move the bow even an inch from its position on the platform.

This foreboding prospect that Sita would have to remain unmarried and the utter sense of helplessness and abject despair that followed in its wake were like the darkness of the night that had descended upon the whole assembly. The lotus flower closes during the night and the bees retire to their hives.

When Lord Ram was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to ‘get up’ and break the bow, the Lord ‘rose’ from his seat. His ‘rising’ from his seat is compared here to the ‘rising of the sun from behind the Udaigiri Mountain’.

The metaphor is most appropriate because Lord Ram’s getting up from his seat to break the bow, which would in turn eliminate the torment, the sorrow and the grief that had eclipsed the hearts of Janak and others in the city, is like the sun rising and eliminating the darkness of the night.

What was a moment earlier an atmosphere of gloom and defeated spirits, an atmosphere that was filled with dejection, despair, helplessness and haplessness, is now replaced with that of hope and expectation of happiness to come.

The metaphor of the ‘Udaigiri Mountain’ is also significant here as it stresses the intensity of hope and expectation that was generated when Lord Ram rose from his seat. When the land is flat, as in plains, light begins to appear in the east and the land begins to get illuminated even though the sun is still far below the line of the horizon at dawn. Even as the sun rises above this line, its splendour, glory and brightness in those early moments of sunrise are not as much intense as when the sun is much above the horizon.

But imagine the scene when we are in a valley and the landscape is surrounded by high mountains: the darkness of the night is more profound, and the valley remains quite dark inspite of the dawn breaking in the eastern horizon. The nascent sun is not visible because of the obstruction of the surrounding mountains. Therefore, it is much later when the sun has risen much higher up in the sky so as to be at an angle above the peaks of the

eastern mountains, and in the meanwhile has attained its full splendour and dazzling glory, that one is able to have its first sight. The rays of the sun pierce through the valley and stab the darkness of the night in a sudden move, eliminating it instantly as compared to a flat land where the darkness goes away gradually.

So we now see how remarkably this metaphor has been employed to dramatise the effect of Lord Ram getting up from his seat by comparing it to the “rise of the sun over the Udaigiri Mountain”. It highlights the severity of the depression that prevailed in the assembly, and the way it was suddenly replaced with the ray of light of hope and joy as soon as Lord Ram made his divine presence clear by rising from his seat.

²The saintly and pious people (“Sant”) present on the occasion immediately cheered up like the lotus flower opening its petals as soon as it sees the first light of the sun. The lotus knows for certain that once the sun has risen there is neither any chance of the darkness of the night surviving nor of the sun going away suddenly; the brightness of the sun would go on enhancing with the progress of the day. So, the lotus opens its petals with confidence, and without harbouring any doubts about the sun’s ability to keep the darkness of the night at bay. Similarly, good people were confident that once Lord Ram has got up from his seat to break the bow, there is no going back, there is no chance of the gloom of a few moments early coming back to haunt them again. So they all cheered up and became happy like the lotus flower.

The blackbee also becomes active during the daytime because the lotus has opened, and therefore now they can seek nectar from the flower. During the night the bee retires because the lotus was closed. The bee hovers over the lotus flower, waiting for it to open fully. Similarly, the eyes of these saintly persons began hovering over Lord Ram, expecting the Lord to quickly break the bow and allow them the once-in-a-lifetime chance to enjoy the pleasure of watching and participating in the festivities and ceremonies that would mark the divine marriage of the Lord with his divine consort Sita.]

चौ०. नृपन्ह केरि आसा निसि नासी । बचन नखत अवली न प्रकासी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nrpanha kēri āsā nisi nāsī. bacana nakhata avalī na prakāsī. 1.

[In these verses which follow now we will read what pshycological effect Lord Ram’s getting up from his seat to go and break the bow had on others in the assembly.]

The night symbolising the remnants of hope that the failed kings might have harboured in their hearts faded away. All the countless words of boast and pretension they had all been vociferously voicing too faded away and lost their relevance like the countless stars of the night that begin lose their light with the fading away of the night (that comes automatically with the rise of the sun). (1)

[Note—As soon as Lord Ram got up from his seat to break the bow, the remnants of murmur and consultations that were going on amongst the kings as to what options were open to them and what king Janak might now propose, subsided. Deep silence prevailed in the entire assembly.]

Prior to Lord Ram standing up to go and break the bow, the defeated kings and princes, already smarting from their defeat and its attendant humiliation, were discussing amongst themselves what measures they should take to avenge their insult even though king Janak had virtually declared the competition closed. Remember: They were not ordinary competitors who would accept defeat and return home humbly. All the participants were great kings in their own right, and had kingdoms and vast realms under their domain. They could not afford to go back to their native kingdoms where their own subjects would be anxiously waiting for their king to return victor and with the trophy represented by Sita in tow. Further, all of them were accustomed to politicking and scheming, making and breaking alliances to suit their interests. Accepting such a ridiculous defeat in such an abject manner at the hands of a lifeless bow that was old, rusty and creaking was simply unpalatable for them. They were contemplating some sort of action, even planning a revolt and were getting ready for the battle that would ensue in its wake. In fact, they would rise in revolt a little later, even going to the extent of declaring their intention of snatching Sita forcibly at the time of her putting the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266.

While all this was going on, Laxman stood up and spoke angrily like thunder striking the earth. These murmurs suddenly vanished like countless people talking animatedly amongst themselves suddenly falling silent as soon as a stab of lightening strikes the earth with a deafening roar. Everyone was stunned into numbness—because none had expected anyone to speak such fiery words directed straight at Janak in full court. But when Laxman was asked to sit down by Lord Ram, some of the murmuring and buzzing reappeared.

Remember: The developments happened in quick succession—as soon as Laxman was asked by Lord Ram with a gesture of his eyes to stop and sit down, sage Vishwamitra asked the Lord to get up and break the bow, and immediately the Lord stood up. In other words, the murmurings that may have resumed in the few intervening moments between Laxman sitting down and Lord Ram standing up, subsided once again. This silence persisted till the time the bow was broken with a snap and a thunderous roar that reverberated throughout the world—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 and its accompanying Chanda that precede Doha no. 261.]

मानी महिप कुमुद सकुचाने । कपटी भूप उलूक लुकाने ॥ २ ॥

mānī mahipa kumuda sakucānē. kapaṭī bhūpa ulūka lukānē. 2.

While the kings who were falsely proud of themselves became ashamed and bashful, withdrawing themselves like the water-lily shutting up its petals in the presence of the sun, those who were wicked and evil-hearted hid themselves from view like the owl which vanishes from sight during the daytime. (2)

[Note—Two categories of kings are cited here: one category consisted of kings who were very proud of their strength and valour as well as the majesty and powers of their respective clans, and the second category was those kings who were crooked at heart and would go to any length to fulfill their wishes, even if it meant adopting unfair means and violating the norms of society and good conduct.

The first category of kings felt ashamed when Janak had sternly rebuked them for their vanity and boastfulness, and their humiliation was compounded by Laxman's caustic words. They lowered their faces in shame and kept sitting with a dejected mood,

trying to avoid any attention. These kings may have had a history of valiant deeds to their credit which made them so confident that they would easily tackle this bow, but the bow proved too much of an opponent for them. Their defeat at the hands of the bow did put them to shame, but since they had not adopted any unfair means they just sat in their seats with a shameful look on their faces as compared to the second category of wicked kings.

This second category of kings were the evil and wicked ones who had never adopted honest means to achieve success in their lives and had relied on cunning and deceit to achieve their objectives. They had little or no history of creditable and valiant deeds to boast of, and they had even tried all the dirty tricks to break the bow, throwing all caution to the wind. It was this category of kings which tried to hide like the owl. In their zest to grab Sita by hook or by crook and to claim credit for breaking the bow, they waited on the sidelines till the time the major kings had individually tried and failed. Then these wicked fellows invoked the brotherhood of kings and instigated others to come and join hands with them so that they would move the bow together—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.

They did not actually exert any effort at moving the bow, but may have merely touched it and pretended to make exertion, while others had actually sweated, huffed and puffed and made strenuous efforts to move it. And in the event the bow would have been broken, they would also have claimed credit for it as well as an equal right for the reward like their friends who had actually made some effort. These cunning and wicked kings are likened to the owl here. They made some excuse and slid away quietly from the venue, fearing exposure and severe punishment.]

भए बिसोक कोक मुनि देवा । बरिसहिं सुमन जनावहिं सेवा ॥ ३ ॥

bha'ē bisōka kōka muni dēvā. barisahim sumana janāvahim sēvā. 3.

The sages and gods resembled the bird known as 'Koka' (or "Chakwak", the ruddy goose, a type of ostrich). They were freed from the sense of sorrow and grief that had been felt by them till now¹. They showered flowers (on Lord Ram) to show their approval and happiness (at the Lord deciding to go and break the bow). (3)

[Note—¹The Chakwak bird is happy during the day because a male is reunited with its female companion. The couple was separated during the night. Lord Ram has been compared to the 'rising sun' in Doha no. 254 above. Hence, when the sages and the gods saw him standing and ready to proceed to the bow to break it, they felt very happy and exuberant.

The question is: Why were the sages and gods worried; hadn't they known that Lord Ram was able to break the bow and remove the darkness of gloom that had descended on the assembly? The answer is: Yes, they were aware of the abilities of the Lord, but they were concerned because they wondered whether or not the Lord wanted to actually break the bow as till that moment he had shown no sign of interest in doing so. Lord Ram had kept sitting silently, and had even asked Laxman to sit down when the latter sought his permission to go and break the bow—refer: (i) Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

So, the sages and gods were in doubt. Lord Ram remaining neutral and showing no visible sign of interest in breaking the bow made them unhappy. But the situation changed suddenly when sage Vishwamitra asked the Lord to stand up and go and break the bow, and the Lord obeyed his instructions and stood up immediately. Now these sages and gods were sure that the desire of their hearts would bear fruit as Lord Ram

would now surely break the bow. That is why it is specially highlighted in this verse that they became happy at the exact moment when Lord Ram stood up to go and break the bow.

Their doubts were dispelled and they all felt cheerful. They showed their happiness and approval by showering flowers.]

गुर पद बंदि सहित अनुरागा । राम मुनिन्ह सन आयसु मागा ॥ ४ ॥
सहजहिं चले सकल जग स्वामी । मत्त मंजु बर कुंजर गामी ॥ ५ ॥

gura pada bandi sahita anurāgā. rāma muninha sana āyasu māgā. 4.
sahajahim calē sakala jaga svāmī. matta manju bara kunjara gāmī. 5.

Lord Ram paid his respects (bowed his head) at the feet of his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) with affection, and also sought permission from the sages who were accompanying him.¹ (4)

After that, the Lord of the entire world (“Jag-Swami”) proceeded ahead (towards the platform where the bow was kept) with an elegant gait that was normal and routine for him (as if nothing special had happened, or there was nothing special to be done; the Lord had no sign of excitement or uncertainty on his face; his gait was normal).²

This gait, however, was very majestic and elegant as it reminded one of a mighty elephant in a rut who is walking triumphantly without any bother in its mind³. (5)

[Note—¹Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was not alone; many sages had accompanied him to Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 240.

Sage Vishwamitra was the Guru (teacher) of the two brothers; he had taught them the secrets of using mystical weapons and skills required to defeat the most formidable of enemies, as well as how to overcome hunger and thirst during long battles—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

It is absolutely necessary to pay the greatest of respect to one’s Guru if one wishes to succeed in any endeavour. Lord Ram himself set an example by bowing at the feet of his Guru before setting out on the endeavour to break the bow. This is also the reason why the Lord walked confidently as he proceeded towards the bow because he was certain that with the blessing of his Guru—and mind you, he was not any ordinary Guru, but a renowned sage with stupendous mystical powers and spiritual capabilities, one who had the ability to turn events favourably for anyone whom he desired to favour—he had nothing to worry about. The Lord was well aware of how fearless and confident he had felt in the protective custody of the sage when ferocious demons had confronted him in the forest, once by Tadka while they were on the way to the sage’s hermitage, and then by the huge demon army of Marich and Subahu at the time of the protection of the sage’s fire sacrifice. At that time there was a real danger and uncertainty because it was a ferocious no-hold-barred battle with demons, but now the issue is merely of breaking an old creaking bow! If the spiritual powers and mystical might of the sage had enabled the former victory, the Lord thought, the breaking of the bow is merely a child’s play. So, what to worry and bother about?

He sought permission from all other sages present there to show his respect to them, though this was nothing but a formality. None would have gone against the wishes of sage Vishwamitra in the first place, and secondly, all of them had wanted that Lord Ram

should go and break the bow as it is clear when they felt happy at Laxman's angry outburst—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254.

With the blessing of these great sages, Lord Ram was absolutely sure of success.

²Lord Ram was “the Lord of the world”, or in other words, the Supreme Being, the Parmatma in a human form. The supreme Lord is also known as “Brahm” in the Upanishads. This Brahm is said to be neutral and dispassionate; for Brahm every situation is alike. There is nothing so desirable that its access or possession would give happiness to him, or so undesirable that its presence would create repugnance in him. Being the supreme Lord of the world, he knows everything. Lord Ram knew that he was Lord Vishnu, and that Sita was his eternal divine consort goddess Laxmi, that they had taken human forms to fulfill the promise the Lord had made to the gods and mother earth to come down from the heaven to eliminate the cruel demons who had unleashed a reign of terror (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 187).

Therefore Lord Ram knew that he and Sita were destined to be united, and this is another reason why he showed no reaction or emotion as he walked towards the bow when sage Vishwamitra asked him to break it.

³In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 11, the way Lord Ram walked towards the bow has been compared to the way a ‘lion’ (mrgapati) walks forward—fearlessly, without a trace of hesitation and doubt, majestically and royally.]

चलत राम सब पुर नर नारी । पुलक पूरि तन भए सुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

calata rāma saba pura nara nārī. pulaka pūri tana bha'ē sukhārī. 6.

As Lord Ram moved towards the bow, a thrill passed through the bodies of all the men and women present on the occasion; all of them felt exceedingly happy and excited (as this was the moment they were waiting for). (6)

[Note—All the citizens had fervently wanted Lord Ram to be Sita's groom. This is abundantly clear at two places—(i) the first is during the two brothers' visit to the city: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222; and (ii) the second evidence is when the citizens rushed to the arena as soon as they learnt that the two princes are going to attend the bow breaking ceremony: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240.

What more could they want? The grand moment has arrived. This electrified all the citizens, and they were filled with hope and expectation. As we shall be reading in the following verses, all of them staked whatever rewards were due to them for any good and meritorious deed they may have done as they prayed frantically to their respective gods and goddesses to make the bow light so that Lord Ram breaks it easily.

These citizens were overcome with grief and sorrow a while ago when king Janak had declared that since no one could break the bow, Sita would have to remain unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5 and 7 that precede Doha no. 252.

Their sense of despair was compounded because Janak had made no mention of inviting Lord Ram to break the bow when he said “no one could break it”; he had not given any hint to the effect that the Lord was offered an opportunity but he had declined to accept it. The humble citizens fretted and fumed under their breaths, but none could dare to challenge their king because it would mean great indiscipline and an insult of their king in front of the full assembly where great kings and princes from all the corners of the world were present. Even if the king excused them if they stood up and spoke, as

he had indeed forgiven Laxman, still the citizens feared that these invited kings would get a very wrong and negative impression of the kingdom which they would spread far and wide when they returned home. All of them loved their kind king and his lovable daughter Sita very much. So they did not want to do anything from their side that would precipitate things and create a horribly piquant situation of ignominy that comes with indiscipline in a kingdom, a development that would leave an indelible negative image of the citizenry and the kingdom as a whole on the minds of the assembled kings and princes.

Therefore, at that time the citizens had felt very sorrowful and sad. But now, when Lord Ram stepped forward to break the bow, the atmosphere of gloom and despair was suddenly replaced with that of hope and joy. Hence, the citizens felt 'happy now'. The contrast between the two moments is sharp and clear.]

बंदि पितर सुर सुकृत सँभारे । जौं कछु पुन्य प्रभाउ हमारे ॥ ७ ॥
तौ सिवधनु मृनाल की नाई । तोरहुँ रामु गनेस गोसाई ॥ ८ ॥

bandi pitara sura sukrta sam̐bhārē. jaum̐ kachu pun'ya prabhā'u hamārē. 7.
tau sivadhanu mṛnālā kī nā'īm̐. tōrahum̐ rāmu ganēsa gōsā'īm̐. 8.

They (the men and women; the citizens who had collected to watch the event) frantically bowed before their respective 'Pittars' (benevolent Spirits of dead ancestors) and prayed to the gods ("Surs"), pleading with them urgently and sincerely as follows—'Whatever good deeds we have done, whatever merit we have accumulated in our lives [7], then oh Lords, as well as Lord Ganesh, please make it possible that the bow of Lord Shiva is easily broken by Lord Ram as if it was merely a stalk of the lotus flower [8].' (7-8)

[Note—The citizens have heard Laxman who had, just a few moments ago, declared that he would lift the bow as if it was very light and soft like the stalk or stem of the lotus flower—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 253. Hence, they decided that it must be made as light and soft as the stalk of the lotus flower to enable Lord Ram to break it because Laxman can't be wrong in making this comparison. The people had no time or the mental inclination during those crucial moments to think of some better metaphor or simile, so they just invoked Laxman's example to pray to their gods because there was no time to be lost.

Refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260 below.]

दो०. रामहि प्रेम समेत लखि सखिन्ह समीप बोलाइ ।
सीता मातु सनेह बस बचन कहइ बिलखाइ ॥ २५५ ॥

dōhā.

rāmahi prēma samēta lakhi sakhinha samīpa bōlā'i.
sītā mātu sanēha basa bacana kaha'i bilakhā'i. 255.

Sita's mother looked affectionately at Lord Ram. She summoned her lady friends and, unable to contain her emotions arising out of her affection for the Lord, spoke to them with great sadness and grief in her poignant words. (Doha no. 255)

[Note—This was the first time when Sita's mother, the queen, had seen the two brothers. The mere sight of Lord Ram filled her motherly heart with affection and natural love like that a woman would have for her own son. She lamented that it is inappropriate to send such a nice, such a tender and young boy to lift a hard and heavy bow that even the mightiest of kings of the earth had failed to move. This young boy should be spared this humiliation even if her daughter remained unmarried for life. Sending him to lift the stern bow is like striking a rocky mountain with a soft clod of earth; how can this clod move the mountain? The clod itself would be broken to pieces. Why does the sage and her own husband, the king, not realise this?

A mother's kind heart cannot bear to see her young son, who has never faced any hardships in life previously, being suddenly left to fend for himself against odds that stack heavily against him by his own father and other senior members of the family. Her heart cries out in grief and agony and pain though she cannot gather courage to resist the orders of her husband and other seniors. She vents her frustration and pain by telling her close female friends how much and how strongly she disapproves of this development. This is the way Sita's mother reacted.

This Doha also shows that she too had developed a natural sense of love and affection for Lord Ram as her husband had done already at the time of meeting the Lord when he had gone to welcome sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

What the queen told her companions, we will read below from verse nos. 1-5.]

चौ०. सखि सब कौतुकु देखनिहारे । जेउ कहावत हितू हमारे ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sakhi saba kautuku dēkhanihārē. jē'u kahāvata hitū hamārē. 1.

Sita's mother was extremely sad and poignant, and when she spoke her words reflected her pain, dismay and desperation—'Oh friend! Even those who profess that they are our friends and well-wishers, are watching (or rather 'enjoying') this development as ordinary spectators.

[That is, why are our so-called friends and well-wishers not intervening and speaking up against the inappropriateness of pitting such a young boy as Lord Ram against the bow which is very strong and sturdy? Why do they keep quiet? Don't they see that it is a great injustice that is being perpetrated right before their eyes? Why should an innocent boy of young age be humiliated in this way because he cannot disobey the orders of his Guru who has thoughtlessly instructed him to break a bow which everyone has seen just now didn't move a bit even when kings renowned for their strength and power did their best to move it? A person is said to be one's friend and well-wisher if he fearlessly gives appropriate good advice, but these people are sitting mutely and enjoying the spectacle like other ordinary people. Then say, what is the difference between them

and the rest of the people? Haven't they lost the moral right to call themselves our friends and well-wishers?] (1)

[Note—The implication is clear: The queen means that these people are not willing to speak out of fear of king Janak. But a true friend and well-wisher is one who speaks fearlessly and gives honest advice, who is more concerned about the welfare of the person than the fear of annoying him if he does not like their advice. Remember: Janak was a king, and a king is supposed to have advisors who give him good advice irrespective of whether he likes it or not. Can't the king's ministers and confidantes see the wrong that is being perpetrated just because Sita has to be married?

Is it that they don't want to give the impression that they are creating hurdles in allowing a competitor to try his hand at the bow in the hope that he might actually succeed against all the odds inspite of clearly seeing that this boy's tender age and delicate body do not allow this to become possible?]

कोउ न बुझाइ कहइ गुर पाहीं । ए बालक असि हठ भलि नाहीं ॥ २ ॥

kō'u na bujhā'i kaha'i gura pāhīm. ē bālaka asi haṭha bhali nāhīm. 2.

Why is no one explaining to the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) and advising him that he (Lord Ram) is now merely a young boy, and not a matured warrior. Hence, this decision on the Guru's part in ordering him (to go and break the bow) is totally uncalled for; it is absolutely unwarranted and unjustified. (2)

रावन बान छुआ नहिं चापा । हरे सकल भूप करि दापा ॥ ३ ॥

सो धनु राजकुअँर कर देहीं । बाल मराल कि मंदर लेहीं ॥ ४ ॥

rāvana bāna chu'ā nahīm cāpā. hārē sakala bhūpa kari dāpā. 3.
sō dhanu rājaku'amra kara dēhīm. bāla marāla ki mandara lēhīm. 4.

Even Ravana and Banasur did not dare to touch the bow. All the kings who dared were defeated after making loud boasts. (3)

How ridiculous and strange it is that the same bow is being allowed to be handled by a young prince? Say, can a young Swan ever lift Mt. Mandar ("mandara"; also known as Mandrachal)? [Has everyone, the sage, the king and all our well-wishers, taken leave of their senses?] (4)

[Note—Mt. Mandrachal is a huge cylindrical mountain that was used to churn the ocean by the gods and the demons in search of nectar. According to mythology, it is one of the heaviest mountains in existence, the others being Mt. Sumeru where the gods live, and Mt. Kailash where Lord Shiva lives.

In this verse, Lord Ram is compared to a young swan, and the bow to Mt. Mandrachal. Sita's mother wonders how it is ever possible for a swan to lift this huge mountain. In other words, she says that it seems highly unlikely to her that Lord Ram would be able to lift the mighty bow.]

भूप सयानप सकल सिरानी । सखि बिधि गति कछु जाति न जानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpa sayānapa sakala sirānī. sakhi bidhi gati kachu jāti na jānī. 5.

It appears that good sense and wisdom have taken leave of the king (Janak) (because he is allowing such a stupid thing to happen in his presence, without resisting or at least requesting sage Vishwamitra to reconsider his orders).

Oh friend, the ways of destiny and providence are queer; no one knows what the creator (“Bidhi”) had in mind while he designed a person’s future.’ (5)

[Note—The queen mother implies that this world is such a mysterious place to live in. One person’s destiny entangles another person if the two cross paths. If it is true that it is written in providence that Sita would remain unmarried as declared by king Janak (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 252), then this innocent boy, Lord Ram, has unnecessarily been drawn into this vortex of misfortunes just because he happened to come here for a causal visit in the company of sage Vishwamitra.

She laments, ‘How sorrowful it is that this lovely and innocent boy Ram is being dragged into the dark pit of infamy and humiliation just because my daughter Sita has everything written wrong in her own destiny!’

She argues that Lord Ram was not a competitor; he had not shown any interest or eagerness to try the bow. This is proved when the sage ordered him to get up and go break the bow: Lord Ram had shown no emotions whatsoever (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 254).

He had even disciplined his angry brother and made him sit down (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254).

Why is he then being forced to face certain humiliation when everyone knows about the fate of other kings who are physically much stronger and better well-built than Lord Ram, and are experienced and matured at handling weapons?]

बोली चतुर सखी मृदु बानी । तेजवंत लघु गनिअ न रानी ॥ ६ ॥

bōlī catura sakhī mṛdu bānī. tējavanta laghu gani'a na rānī. 6.

[The queen’s female attendant, who was also her close ‘friend’, constant companion and confidante, assured her that she need not worry about Lord Ram’s young age or delicate frame as these external features are very misleading and do not give an idea of the Lord’s mystical powers that are of an astounding proportion.]

The clever friend of the queen replied reassuringly with a sweet voice—‘Oh queen! One must not be misled or become deluded to treat someone as weak, fragile, incompetent, lacking in abilities and powers simply due to his external features because more often than not they do not give a true idea of the reality hidden behind the external façade, the reality about the person’s stupendous mystical and spiritual powers as well as his virtues, abilities, strength, character, nature, intelligence etc. that are subtle aspects of a person’s over-all personality and are hidden from view¹.

So oh queen, he (Lord Ram) has astounding glory and dynamic powers that are not visible externally. And therefore, you must not treat him as weak and fragile and incompetent (to break the formidable bow)². (6)

[Note—¹From the perspective of spiritualism and metaphysics, one must not be misled by, or be disillusioned with the external features of something in this gross world, as more often than not this veil of delusions hide the subtle reality which is quite the opposite of what is visible externally. For instance, the world appears to be true and real from its external features, it appears to be a provider of happiness and joy. But in reality it is a harbinger of all sorrows and miseries that torment the creature. It is just like a mirage seen in a desert: the more one pursues it in the quest for happiness and peace, the further away it recedes from him. So those who are wise do not seek happiness or bliss in this external world, but rather they turn inwards to find these virtues hidden in a subtle form in the Atma, the pure consciousness, that lies within one's own 'self' rather than in the external world.

²The lady friend must have heard about Lord Ram's great achievements, such as his liberation of Ahilya (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with its preceding Chanda and Chaupai line nos. 11-12), his slaying of the demoness Taadka (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209), his defeating and elimination of the demon army along with its commanders Subahu and flicking of another demon Marich into the ocean (refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210), and helping sage Vishwamitra complete his fire sacrifice (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 6 that precede Doha no. 210).

The word about Lord Ram's great achievements had spread like wildfire in the city of Janakpur—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 221.

Hence, this friend was well aware of all these developments and therefore was confident about the Lord's abilities. Further, she also knew about sage Vishwamitra's own fame and great mystical powers, and when she observed that Lord Ram has full blessing and support of the sage she became absolutely certain that victory that would come with the breking of the bow will be his.

The queen's lamentations and doubts show that she was yet unaware of these developments; no one had told her about them. This means also that her own husband, king Janak, either hadn't had the time or did not think it necessary to tell her about Lord Ram and Laxman as well as about the arrival of the great sage Vishwamitra, because had the king told her about what the sage had himself told him about the two brothers (refer: Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos.6-8) then she would not have behaved the way she did.

The king did not tell anybody about the two brothers because it would have been extremely odd on his part and would have given a wrong message to everyone if he had praise any one particular prince when so many hundreds of them have arrived to take part in a competition which was supposed to be open to all in an impartial manner. King Janak was renowned for his dispassion and detachment from all worldly emotions (which the king himself has admitted in Baal Kand, Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216), and if the king had praised the two brothers openly it would have given an impression that he has developed some sort of liking for them, something that was not in his nature or character, and would have surely boomeranged to create a negative picture of him and undermine his exalted stature in the society. Hence, king Janak had not told anybody, including the queen herself, about his affection for the two brothers.]

कहँ कुंभज कहँ सिंधु अपारा । सोषेउ सुजसु सकल संसारा ॥ ७ ॥

kaham̐ kumbhaja kaham̐ sindhu apārā. sōṣē'u sujasu sakala sansārā. 7.

[To prove her point and convince the queen, this friend sites a number of instances in the following verses—]

What comparison can be made between sage Agastya who was born out of a pitcher or jar (“Kumbhaj”—i.e. one who had a small frame that fitted in a pitcher)¹, and the vast ocean that cannot be measured (which is endless and fathomless). But still this sage’s glory and fame is well known in the world as he had dried the mighty ocean by scooping it up in his cupped palms and then drinking it in three gulps².

[In other words, inspite of being like any other human being with a limit to what one can drink and accommodate in one’s stomach, sage Agastya had such astounding mystical powers that he had once drunk the water of the whole ocean to completely empty it, to completely dry it. Sage Agastya’s physical body was like any other man, and so apparently was the ability of his stomach to accommodate water.

No one could have imagined by looking at the physical features of sage Agastya who was like an ordinary ‘man’ with limited space in his body that he can drink the whole ocean in merely three gulps so as to completely dry its bed. But he actually did it, and this mysterious feat of his is well known in the world and has made him famous for all times to come. So, in the present context of Lord Ram and the mighty bow, you must not be worried: just like the humble-looking sage Agastya had devoured the mighty ocean which seemed an impossible thing to do if one were to judge things merely on their physical aspects and dimensions, Lord Ram would also triumph over the resistance offered by the bow very easily though he looks so young and tender while the bow has already proved its mightiness and strength by defeating the combined strength and might of the greatest of kings.] (7)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32.

²The story of sage Agastya and his drinking of the ocean is as follows in brief—

Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt.

Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, and (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good

stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.]

रबि मंडल देखत लघु लागा । उदयँ तासु तिभुवन तम भागा ॥ ८ ॥

rabi maṇḍala dēkhata laghu lāgā. udayam̐tāsu tibhuvana tama bhāgā. 8.

The Sun looks so small against the background of the vast domain of the sky, but as soon as it rises, the darkness that had hitherto encircled the entire world known as the 'Tribhuvan' (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world) runs away from sight (i.e. the darkness of the night vanishes and leaves the sky alone). (8)

[Note—The same idea was earlier expressed by Laxman in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 239.

The lady friend uses the same logic as she had used for sage Agastya in the previous verse, that one must not judge anyone by physical appearances, here also by applying it to the Sun and its ability to remove the darkness of the night. She in effect says that merely judging the ability of any entity based on its physical dimensions does not provide the real picture of its actual abilities because the Sun, though only a small ball against the vast area of the sky, is able to triumph over the all-encompassing and impenetrable veil of darkness that prevailed in the world before it (the Sun) arrived.

The veil of darkness of the night is absolutely over-powering; it covers the entire world in a thick dark shroud that not even the combined strength of the full moon as well as millions of stars are able to remove or overcome. But the mere hint of the sun coming up in the sky in the very early hours of dawn while it is still below the horizon in the east, much before actual sun-rise, the darkness of the night begins to fade away, or literally the darkness 'runs away', leaving the sky and world free from its overwhelming influence.

Further, when the sun rises in the sky, all other heavenly bodies that had made their appearances during the night, such as the moon and the stars, too fade away. Similarly, Lord Ram's presence in the arena has put to shame all the kings and princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Doha no. 238.

Hence, the lady friend assured the queen that Lord Ram would certainly overcome the might of the bow and remove the darkness of gloom and despair that this bow has cast over all of them much like the Sun triumphing over the formidable and foreboding darkness of the night.]

दो०. मंत्र परम लघु जासु बस बिधि हरि हर सुर सर्व ।
महामत्त गजराज कहूँ बस कर अंकुस खर्ब ॥ २५६ ॥

dōhā.

mantra parama laghu jāsu basa bidhi hari hara sura sarba.
mahāmatta gajarāja kahum̐ basa kara aṅkusa kharba. 256.

A Mantra (which is an esoteric spiritual formula)¹ is very small (as it consists of a few letters, words or phrases), but its effect is so profound and far-reaching that all the great Gods, such as the three great Gods of the Trinity, ‘Bidhi’ (Brahma, the creator), ‘Hari’ (Lord Vishnu) and ‘Har’ (Lord Shiva), as well as all other gods of the pantheon are under its influence.

Similarly, a simple looking goad is so powerful and effective in controlling even the wildest of elephants².

[Though a Mantra is too small and consists of lifeless letters, but its dynamism and effect are so profound that even the most powerful of gods are under its control and influence. Similarly, a small iron goad that may not even be visible from a distance is used by the elephant tamer to control a huge wild elephant. Hence, sizes and appearances are no measurements or criterion to judge the potentials, abilities, strength and power of any given entity.

In the present context this means that though Lord Ram appears to be so delicate in frame and young in age that he apparently appears to be no match against the might of the bow which has successfully put to shame thousands of well-built and strong warriors, but this is a fallacious premise to determine the Lord’s actual hidden potentials and mystical powers.

In other words, the lady friend assures the queen that she must be sure that Lord Ram will indeed break the bow, and therefore she must stop worrying.] (Doha no. 256)

[Note—¹A Mantra is an esoteric formula specific for each god. It represents a god’s dynamic field, and it is like that god’s special code or key. It consists of individual letters known as the Beej Mantra or seed Mantra of that god, or may also be a group of letters forming words, such as the holy name of the god, or of phrases that may take the shape of a hymn dedicated to a particular god.

A Mantra is employed by the devotee of a god to invoke the blessings of the worshipped god; it sort of knocks at the concerned god’s door directly, reminding the latter that his devotee needs his help. These Mantras are used for worship purposes as well.

Being specific, use of a particular Mantra during rituals means that a particular god to whom it belongs is being exclusively worshipped or invoked though the general external features and usual steps involved in all the rituals may appear to be the same.

²As compared to the huge size of a wild elephant as well as its strength, the goad appears to be too small and inconsequential. But a Mahaut (an elephant tamer) sits on the animal's back and controls it by stabbing this goad on the elephant's head, neck or sides.]

चौ०. काम कुसुम धनु सायक लीन्हे । सकल भुवन अपनैं बस कीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kāma kusuma dhanu sāyaka līnhē. sakala bhuvana apanēm basa kīnhē. 1.

The god known as Kamdeo (cupid) has kept the whole world under his sway by holding an arrow consisting of flowers; he uses this arrow to subdue and conquer the world.

[Flowers never injure or harm anybody in any way. They are metaphors for beauty, love, kindness and softness. When one has to overcome stiff resistance from one's opponent, when one finds that the use of conventional weapons of threat, persuasion, reasoning and reward fail to make any dent on the opponent's stubbornness, the humble 'flower' does the trick, and it does it so softly, sweetly and harmlessly that the same opponent submits meekly in a way that no other weapon would ever be able to do.

All resistance crumble, even the sternest of hearts yield and buckle when literally attacked by this subtle weapon, the 'flower'. Where all other methods fail to achieve the desired result and make one's adversary mellowed, the 'flower' does the trick.

Kamdeo is the god of love. He uses this soft weapon to conquer the world. In other words, 'love' that is manifested in the form of a 'flower' is able to subdue all resistance and opposition that one may face in life.]¹ (1)

[Note—¹Kamdeo had used this trick to overcome Lord Shiva's reluctance to get involved in such mundane matters as marrying and raising a family, because the Lord is always engrossed in meditation and contemplation, is a renunciate hermit and a recluse. The story goes that when the demon Tarkasur had unleashed his reign of terror in the world, the gods approached Brahma, the creator, to plead with him to find out a way of this horror. Brahma said that it is written in destiny of Tarkasur that he would be killed only by the son of Lord Shiva. But the irony was Shiva was lost in a state of perpetual meditation, and has declared his intention to remain a recluse and a hermit. 'So what has to be done', asked the gods. Brahma replied that only if Shiva marries and begets a son then this demon could be eliminated.

The problem was not of finding an appropriate wife for Shiva because Parvati, the daughter of the king of Mountains, had already done severe Tapa (penance) to be able to marry him, but the problem was that Shiva had renounced all his attachments with the mundane affairs of the world and submerged himself in deep meditation. So, the question now was how to arouse him from his trance-like state of meditation and inspire him to marry.

Since Lord Shiva was the senior god, being known as 'Maha-deva', the 'Great God', it would not be proper for the gods to be impolite with him and rudely wake him up from his meditative posture. Some subtle and pleasant method had to be urgently found. It was now that Kamdeo was summoned and assigned this task by the gods.

Kamdeo used an arrow made of 'flowers' to strike at Lord Shiva. The use of this weapon ensured that the Lord was neither hurt and nor would be insulted—because flowers are used routinely in worship and offerings. As it happened, Lord Shiva did wake

up, but he was so annoyed by Kamdeo's impertinence and temerity to disturb his meditation and contemplation that the Lord opened his third eye from which spouted a flame of angry fire which burnt Kamdeo to ashes.

This entire story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 87.]

देबि तजिअ संसउ अस जानी । भंजब धनुषु राम सुनु रानी ॥ २ ॥

dēbi taji'a sansa'u asa jānī. bhañjaba dhanuṣu rāma sunu rānī. 2.

Hence, oh gracious lady (i.e. the queen), you must abandon all sort of doubts and their attendant consternations and confusions. Listen queen—Lord Ram will indeed break the bow.' (2)

[Note—It is noteworthy how confidently this friend assures the queen. The message here is simple and obvious: We must have fast and total faith in our Lord God; we must not doubt his ability to remove our grief and sorrows. The Lord is omniscient and all-knowing; he watches every thing we do or think of. He just waits for the moment when we put a decisive foot forward, and then the victory is ours. Dithering and trying to jump boats midstream—i.e. getting distracted and thinking that the Lord God whom we adore is not as strong and able as the one whom our companion worships—would make us sink in the sea rather than reaching the shore. Then we go to blame our Lord God for all our miseries and misfortunes and his inability to help us, not ourselves for our lack of faith and conviction and devotion and love for our Lord.]

सखी बचन सुनि भै परतीती । मिटा बिषादु बढी अति प्रीती ॥ ३ ॥

sakhī bacana suni bhai paratītī. miṭā biṣādu baḍhī ati prītī. 3.

When the queen heard these words of her friend, she developed affection and faith in Lord Ram (and the Lord's ability to remove her sorrows and worries about the future of her daughter Sita). Her despondency, grief and the sombre mood that had hitherto overwhelmed her disappeared. This was replaced with enhanced affection and faith in the Lord. (3)

[Note—The queen's lady friend has literally acted as her 'Guru' or moral preceptor in disguise. A Guru's duty is to remove doubts and fears in the mind of his disciple or student. To achieve this aim the Guru speaks fearlessly, without any favour or bias. It is his duty to enlighten his disciple about the reality, and not to add to his confusion. The disciple may not be aware of certain things which the Guru knows, and therefore he must tell the truth. For this purpose and to achieve this aim, anyone can be a person's Guru as long as this Guru helps the person see the reality behind the misleading façade of externals and helps him to overcome doubts and groundless fears.

The lady friend therefore acted in the role of the queen's Guru. When the disciple is told the truth about anything by his Guru, he finds peace because his mind comes to rest.

This attendant of the queen also lived upto her role as a true friend, companion and advisor who strives to remove all sorts of misgivings from the mind and heart of his or her friend in distress, and tries his or her best to encourage the other person to not give up hope.

So, when her lady attendant told her the real potentials of Lord Ram, the queen was reassured and found her mental peace amidst the emotional turmoil that she had faced till now. She now was confident that Lord Ram would indeed break the bow and thereby remove all cause of her misery.

This being the certainty of the case, the queen and her husband king Janak began henceforth to treat Lord Ram as her dear son because once the Lord breaks the bow and marries Sita he would become their 'son-in-law', an inseparable part of their family. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 242.

Similar ideas are expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, goddess Parvati had her doubts about the divine nature of Lord Ram removed when her divine consort, Lord Shiva, had enlightened her about the reality of Lord Ram. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 120.

Similarly, Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, had doubts about the divine nature and supremacy of Lord Ram because he had seen the Lord acting like an ordinary human being. So he approached Lord Shiva to tell him the truth. The Lord directed him to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund who was able to remove all doubts in the mind of Garud who thanked the crow for it. Refer: Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 124 Kha—to Doha no. 125 Ka.

Another important point to note here is this: One develops affection, respect and faith in someone only when he is enlightened about that person's noble virtues, goodness, character, abilities and qualities. In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 89, saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud that "When one is not aware about the grand virtues and qualities of someone, he cannot develop respect, affection, faith and devotion for him just like it is not possible to have a smooth, lubricating effect on a surface without the presence of water".

Having doubts and confusions are like poisonous snakes that robs a person of his mental peace and happiness, and instead fills his mind with fear from imaginary phantoms and ghosts—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 93; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 11.]

तब रामहि बिलोकि बैदेही । सभय हृदयँ बिनवति जेहि तेही ॥ ४ ॥

taba rāmahi bilōki baidēhī. sabhaya hṛdayam̐ binavati jēhi tēhī. 4.

At that moment (i.e. at that time when her mother raised doubts about Lord Ram's abilities and her fears were dispelled by her friend, and the moment when Lord Ram had risen from his seat to walk to the bow), Vaidehi (Sita) looked at Lord Ram, and with fear in her heart she began to pray or plead with all and sundry she could think of (to help her at this crucial moment of her life by enabling Lord Ram to break the bow so that the uncertainty about her future is removed). (4)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/92, stanza no. 2 also.

Let us remember that three developments are occurring simultaneously: (i) Lord Ram has got up from his seat and is proceeding towards the bow; (ii) Sita's mother was concerned at the wisdom of allowing Lord Ram to attempt to break the mighty bow that had put to shame the mightiest of warriors in this world by not moving a bit; and (iii) Sita herself becoming extremely worried as to what would happen of her future in the coming

few minutes. In fact, Sita was the most worried of the lot as her entire future hinged on the outcome of the next few moments.

When a man becomes extremely nervous and worried, he loses his mental bearing and begins to seek help from any quarter that he can imagine of. It's like the case of a drowning man who would cling to any float in the hope of swimming to safety. This is why Sita prays to all the gods and goddesses that came to her mind.

In those desperate moments Sita had forgotten what goddess Parvati had assured her when she had gone to pray and seek her blessings in the temple in the royal garden. The goddess had categorically assured her that her wishes would be fulfilled and that she would be able to marry the dark-complexioned prince she has taken fancy for—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Sita was so nervous and overcome with uncertainties that she forgot this boon. She asks goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva to make the bow light as we shall read in verse nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 257 just below this verse. She didn't realize that even Parvati would not like this attitude of Sita especially in the context of the goddess' explicit assurance as cited above, because it means that Sita did not have faith in her blessings and words, and now repeats her requests once again. Not only limiting herself to requesting Parvati and Shiva, Sita goes on pleading with sundry other gods—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 257.

This incident teaches us not to lose our mental bearing and calm during troubles in our lives because then we tend to forget about our inherent abilities and strengths as well as the hidden support we have been assured of by our patron deity. It only rocks the boat rather than stabilizing it.

This fidgety and anxious state of mind of Sita was read by Lord Ram. We shall read how Lord Ram had waited for the moment till Sita could focus her mind and concentrate her attention on the Lord instead of seeking help from sundry other gods and goddesses. In her anxiety and nervousness, Sita had forgotten this sacrosanct rule of 'Bhakti', or devotion for the Lord, by asking this god and that god to save her future instead of relying on the Lord himself to extricate her from her predicament. So, Lord Ram waited till she finally decided to surrender her self and her fate to the Lord and seek exclusive refuge with him before he actually broke the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 259, and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261.

This observation is in consonance with the one made in respect to her mother in a note of verse nos. 2 and 3 that appear just before the current verse. Having true faith and devotion in one's chosen Lord means that one should ask only him for his needs and have loyalty only towards him. For a true devotee, his chosen Lord God is the only god, the only lord and the only master in this world. He would not go knocking at the doors of other gods and goddesses because this clearly means lack of loyalty and faith. If this happens, his boat is sure to sink mid-stream.]

मनहीं मन मनाव अकुलानी । होहु प्रसन्न महेस भवानी ॥ ५ ॥

करहु सफल आपनि सेवकाई । करि हितु हरहु चाप गरुआई ॥ ६ ॥

manahīm mana manāva akulānī. hōhu prasanna mahēsa bhavānī. 5.
karahu saphala āpani sēvakāī. kari hitu harahu cāpa garu'āī. 6.

She was very upset mentally, and eagerly prayed to Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and his consort Bhavani (goddess Parvati)—‘Oh Lord Mahesh and goddess Bhavani. (5)

Please give me the reward of all the services that I have rendered to you in my life (such as prayers, worship, offerings and all such other meritorious and good deeds that I have done and offered to you). For my sake and my welfare, please remove the heaviness of the bow (and make it light so that Lord Ram can easily lift and break it). (6)

[Note—Refer to note appended to verse no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257 above.]

गननायक बरदायक देवा । आजु लगें कीन्हिउँ तुअ सेवा ॥ ७ ॥

बार बार बिनती सुनि मोरी । करहु चाप गुरुता अति थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

gananāyaka baradāyaka dēvā. āju lagērṁ kīnhi'um̐ tu'a sēvā. 7.
bāra bāra binatī suni mōrī. karahu cāpa gurutā ati thōrī. 8.

Oh Lord Gan-naayak (“gananāyaka”; i.e. Lord Ganesh, the chief of all attendants of Lord Shiva)! Thou art the Lord who grants desired boons to those who seek them from thee (“baradāyaka”; i.e. you are the wish-fulfiller of those who pray to you)¹. I have been serving thee (i.e. offering worship to you and praying to you) till this day with all diligence and faith, and to the best of mine ability. (7)

I most earnestly and repeatedly beg thee (by citing and invoking thine gracious nature of fulfilling the wish of those who seek anything from thee, and especially so in mine case because I have been serving thee all my life till this fateful day when my future is to be decided) that thou must pay heed to mine prayers and make the bow as light-weighted as it possibly can be made by thee (for I am thine humble devotee who hath been serving thee for the whole of mine life, and therefore expect this favour from thee).² (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 235 of this book.

Lord Ganesh has many other names besides the two cited here, i.e. ‘Gan-naayak’ and ‘Bar-daayak’. He is also known as Vinaayak. Other names of Lord Ganapati are enumerated in the Ganapati Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition as follows:—Lord Ganesh (refer verse no. 8); Ekdanta or the Lord with one tusk, Vakratunda or the Lord with a bent trunk (refer verse no. 10); Vraatpati or the one who is the chief amongst the Gods, Ganapati or the chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva, Pramath-pati or the chief of a special category of attendants of Lord Shiva, known as Pramaths, who give immense misery to those who are sinful, Lambodar or the one with a big abdomen; pot-bellied, Vighna-Vinaayak or the one who destroys all hurdles and misfortunes, Sri Varadmuti or the one who is an embodiment of blessings and grants whatever boons one desires, and Shiva-sut or the son of Lord Shiva (refer verse no. 15).

The Lord derives his name Gajaanana or Gajpati or Gajamukh from the root word ‘Gaj’ meaning an elephant, and ‘Ja’ meaning an origin or birth. Hence, these names indicate that the Lord has taken birth in a form that has the head and body like that of an elephant. The elephant head stands for the macrocosm, while the rest of the body which resembles that of a human stands for the microcosm. These two aspects of this creation are not separate from one another but form a composite unit just like the head and the body of Lord Ganesh are not separate from one another but form one composite body of

the Lord, though the head represents an animal (an elephant) and the rest of the body represents a human being.

In other words, one is regarded as learned, wise and enlightened only if he is able to see the Supreme Being even in the oddest and the most unconventional form of life in this creation. One must see the Lord in a healthy man as much as in a deformed and a handicapped individual; one must see the Lord in an animal as much as in a human form.

Another connotation is the following—the word ‘ga’ implies ‘gati’ or fate and destination of creation, and ‘ja’ means birth or origin. Hence, the word ‘Gajpati’ means the Lord from whom the rest of the creation has taken birth, and in whom the creation would finally collapse and merge at the end.

He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

The two wives of Lord Ganapati are said to be Buddhi and Shiddhi who are personifications of the virtues of intellect and the glories that come with achievements. One of the sub-Purans or Up-purans, known as ‘Mudgal-puran’ which is named after sage Mudgal is dedicated chiefly to the narration of the nine main incarnations of Lord Ganapati, or Lord Ganesh who is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and is the chief deity who is worshipped first during any religious ceremony or auspicious activity. This Up-puran was probably written between 900-1100 A.D. The nine incarnations of Ganapati mentioned in this sub-Puran are the following—Vakradanta, Ekdanta, Mahodar, Gajaanana, Lambodar, Vikat, Vighna-raaja, Dhumra-varna, and Yoga. Besides these nine incarnations, it also lists 23 more forms of Lord Ganesh.

He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

The Tripura Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse no. 15, describes the Mantra of Lord Ganesh which highlights his exalted nature and superior stature amongst all the gods, while Canto 4, paragraph no. 12 describes its importance for the worshipper.

The Mantra is “Ganaanam Twa Ganpatim Havaamahe Kavim Kavinaamupasra-vastabham; Jyestha Rajam Brahanam Brahamnaspatha Aa Naha Srinva-annutubhiha Seed Saadanam”. [Briefly it means—‘I pay my obeisance and respect to Lord Ganesh who is the most senior amongst all the attendants of the Lord and even the Gods. He is most exalted, wise and learned. He is like the biggest king or emperor amongst those who are enlightened about Brahman, and is Brahman himself personified. There is no one better or senior than you. Be gracious upon me; be pleased with me. I bow before you most humbly and submit myself before you.’]

When this hymn is being said, the worshipper should prefix and suffix it with the Beej Mantra of Ganesh, which is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ga’ (as in gum) with a Bindu (dot) on top, and pronounced as ‘Gam/Gan(g)’ (pronounced as gum or gun(g)).]

The ‘Tarak Mantra’ of Lord Ganapati is ‘OM Gum/gun(g)’ according to the Ganapati Upanishad, verse no. 8.

Now let us understand the symbolism of the various parts of this God. His ‘large ears’ imply that the Lord hears everything, from every corner, and from everyone; the Lord is extremely receptive and gathers information and knowledge from all available sources. He is a good listener, a virtue that makes him a good teacher, because one has to

learn first and it is only then that he can teach others. The large size of the ear that resemble a winnow-basket or a hand-held fan indicate that the Lord is able to blow away useless pieces of information and accept only the useful ones like the case of the winnowing basket or the hand-fan that is used to blow away chaff and retain the grain.

His 'large head' stands for great intellect and mind.

He has 'two tusks'—one that is full stands for the Truth that is perfect, complete, priceless and beautiful. The other tusk that is broken indicates an imperfect world that is incomplete, worthless, and not as good as it seems to be. Since the two tusks are part of Lord Ganesh's body, the implication is that both the Absolute Truth as well as the not-so-absolute truth is a part of the universal whole known as Brahm. In other words, the perfect world of spiritual truth represented by the full tusk, and the imperfect world of material sense objects represented by the broken tusk are part of the same universal Truth known as Brahm. The fact that the intellect helps one to discriminate between the right and the wrong only when there is a choice is indicated by the two tusks—one that is full indicates the correct and the straight path, and the one that is broken implies the crooked and the wrong path.

The 'bent and long trunk' has the following connotations—(i) it stands for OM, the cosmic sound that reverberates ('trumpets') in the ether that fills the space of the sky where the entire creation is harboured; (ii) since the trunk emerges from the head of the elephant and it can uproot big trees and clear the path ahead for the elephant, the implied meaning is that the Lord employs his mind and intellect to get rid of the greatest of delusions and ignorance and other spiritual obstacles or hurdles, no matter how crooked they may be, that come in the way of seekers of Truth.

His 'wide mouth' indicates a good appetite, and this stands for his ability to accept a wide range of knowledge. It also means that the Lord can speak on a wide range of topics with the greatest of ease and with the highest level of erudition and expertise at oratory.

His 'big belly' stands for his endless appetite for knowledge and wisdom which he assimilates with ease. Being a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, it also means that the Lord harbours the entire creation inside his own self. His big belly stands for the immense size of the universe.

Ganesh has 'four arms' indicating the four components of the Antha-karan, called the inner-self. These are Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankaar (ego, false pride etc.)

One of his hands holds a 'Paasha (snare; rope)' which stands for worldly attachments and entanglements that the Lord is able to control. The second hand holds an 'Ankush (goad)' which stands for the ability to exercise control over the sense organs and natural urges. The third hand holds a 'Modak' (a ball of sweetmeat) which stands for the spiritual rewards. And the fourth hand is held in the 'Var Mudra' which is used to bless his devotees and give them fearlessness.

His mount is a 'small mouse'. The mouse is notorious for stealing grain and ruining the store. Hence it is a metaphor for all the evil and negative qualities in a creature that are demeaning for his soul and lead to his ruin, and the fact that the Lord sits on the mouse shows that the Lord helps one to overcome them; or the fact that the Lord is able to overcome and subdue all the negativities of creation. The 'small' size of the mouse indicates that even a small negative trait in us can rob us of all the other good we have like the small rat can ruin the greatest of harvest or a huge granary.

The mouse is fond of sweets and grains. This indicates that the Lord is fond of good virtues and qualities of creation, and he searches them out from all the corners of creation like the mouse that goes on rummaging for grain and sweetmeats throughout his life.

The Ganapati Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, which is the twenty-fifth Upanishad of this Veda, is entirely dedicated to him. It is propounded therein that Lord

Ganapati resides in the inner-self of all living beings as their Atma, the soul and the pure consciousness. It then goes on to explain the meaning of the word Ganapati, how to meditate upon the Lord, the Mala-Mantras dedicated to him which are used to turn the beads of the rosary while doing Japa (repetition of the holy Mantras), the spiritual rewards of such meditation and contemplation, some special Mantras of the Lord which helps the worshipper fulfill his desires and attain fruits of his efforts, the benefits of reading this eclectic Upanishad, and the rules to be followed while doing so as well as for preaching this Upanishad to others. The visible form of Lord Ganapati has also been described in this Upanishad (verse no. 11-14).

The image of Lord Ganapati is described in verse nos. 11-12 of the Ganapati Upanishad as follows—

“verse no. 11 = The Lord (Ganapati) has one tusk and four arms. He holds a ‘Paash’ (a snare) and an ‘Ankush’ (a goad) in two of his arms, while the third is held in the ‘Abhaya Mudra’ (the posture that grants perpetual fearlessness to his devotees) and the fourth in the ‘Var Mudra’ (the posture that grants boon of wish fulfillment to his devotees). He holds a flag with the insignia of a rat/mouse (11).

“verse no. 12 = His countenance is red like blood. His abdomen is large (big and pot-bellied). His ears are also large like the hand-held winnowing fan. He is covered in clothes of red colour.

His body is covered by a paste of red-coloured perfume. He is duly worshipped with red coloured flowers (12).”

²Sita’s prayers can be paraphrased in a different way as follows—“Oh Lord Ganesh! You have an unchallenged and immaculate reputation as the God who fulfills any desire the worshipper has when he offers his worship to you. You are universally adored and offered worship on a priority basis before one offers worship to any other god because not only are you the greatest in the pantheon of gods but also because once you are pleased with the worshipper then all other gods are easy to please; none of them would ever think of denying what the worshipper wishes if you have agreed to fulfill his wishes.

This fact is metaphorically depicted in your being appointed as the ‘chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva’. Lord Shiva the greatest of the three senior-most gods, i.e. the three gods of the holy Trinity consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder. It is this reason why Shiva is honoured by the title of a ‘Maha-Deva’, the Great God. All other gods are his juniors, i.e. they attend to the wishes of Lord Shiva. Therefore, your anointment as the chief of Shiva’s attendants is a symbolic way of making you the ‘chief of all the gods who are junior to Lord Shiva’.

Today is the day I had been waiting all my life. Today is the day of my judgement as to how sincerely and diligently I have been serving you. Today is the day that will test your fame as the gracious and benevolent bestower of boons. Today is the day which will decide the entire future of my life and its happiness. Today is the day of making or breaking for me.

Hence, I employ all the powers that prayers inherently have in them, and I have come begging at your doorstep with the full hope and expectation that I will not be turned away disappointed. Remember Lord Ganesh: If my wish is not fulfilled today, which is extremely crucial for me and my entire future life, then you will not be able to save your reputation, your grace and your face in the world anymore.

I have never requested you for anything all my life inspite of serving you to the best of my ability. This is the first time I am in need. So please be compassionate and considerate inspite of my failings and drawbacks that I cannot deny I have. So, notwithstanding all other things, you are requested to salvage my life today.

And all I request you is to ‘make the bow as light-weight as you can.’”]

दो०. देखि देखि रघुबीर तन सुर मनाव धरि धीर ।
भरे बिलोचन प्रेम जल पुलकावली सरीर ॥ २५७ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi dēkhi raghubīra tana sura manāva dhari dhīra.
bharē bilōcana prēma jala pulakāvalī sarīra. 257.

Sita repeatedly glanced at the form (literally the ‘body’; “tana”) of Lord Ram, gathered courage and invoked or prayed to the gods.

Her eyes were filled with tears of affection (for the Lord), and her body was thrilled. (Doha no. 257)

[Note—In other words, the more Sita looked at Lord Ram, the more anxious and nervous she felt. She has already prayed fervently to Parvati, Shiva and Ganesh, the three deities who are renowned for their benevolence and magnanimity when it comes to granting boons and fulfilling one’s desires. After this prayer, Sita somehow felt a little bit reassured that the chances of Lord Ram breaking the bow has brightened because she was absolutely certain that none of these deities would disappoint her. So she looked at Lord Ram and sighed. But she was so overcome with anxiety and worries that she could not sufficiently assure herself, and therefore started praying to the remaining gods so that they too feel pleased and help her. She feared that otherwise the remaining gods might get offended at being by-passed and create some sort of unexpected problems in Lord Ram’s breaking of the bow.

In spite of the prayers, Sita’s worries and anxiety did not abate. She sobbed and wept silently because she was not sure if her desire to marry Lord Ram would ever fructify. She thought that this is the last chance she has of seeing her beloved Lord, because if he is unable to break the bow for any reason whatsoever, then that is it: she will never see him again! This uncertainty compounded her miseries manifold.

The verses that follow below explain why she was so worried.]

चौ०. नीकें निरखि नयन भरि सोभा । पितु पनु सुमिरि बहुरि मनु छोभा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nīkēm nirakhi nayana bhari sōbhā. pitu panu sumiri bahuri manu chōbhā. 1.

She looked at the beautiful and enthralling form of Lord Ram till her eyes felt contented. But soon the gloom and despair returned as she recalled the vows of her father (that he will marry her only to someone who breaks the bow). (1)

[Note—As we have read in the note of Doha no. 257 above, Sita initially felt assured after her prayers to Parvati, Shiva, Ganesh and all other gods that they would listen to her prayers and enable Lord Ram to break the bow. So for a while she enjoyed the wonderful sight of Lord Ram’s enchanting image. But her gloomy thoughts took hold over her once again.

She recalled the vow of her father, and his nature that he does not yield once he makes up his mind. He has already declared that since no one could break the bow, he will have to bear with the pain of keeping his daughter unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 252.

Like her mother who had doubts about the ability of Lord Ram, by the external look of his delicate frame and his young age, to lift and break the heavy bow which has already put to shame the strength, power and valour of thousands of kings who prided themselves for these qualities, Sita too gets worried about the Lord being actually able to lift and break the bow. But whereas the queen mother had felt free to disclose her thoughts to her well-informed friend who had removed her doubts by explaining the reality to her, Sita did not have this privilege at this moment as she was standing in the arena with all eyes focused on her, and therefore had to be careful about each movement and gesture to avoid scandals and ignominy. She was left to fend for herself, trying to rationalise with her anxious mind which was already on the edge, to the best of her logic and reasoning, without being able to seek any moral support or having a shoulder of a friend to place her head upon and weep.

It's really to the credit of Sita that she managed to maintain her external poise, did not faint or her allow her knees to buckle and make her fall.

Now, when she remembered her father's vow, she mentally cursed him as follows—]

अहह तात दारुनि हठ ठानी । समुझत नहिं कछु लाभु न हानी ॥ २ ॥

ahaha tāta dārūni haṭha ṭhānī. samujhata nahim kachu lābhu na hānī. 2.

She was remorseful and lamented as follows—‘Oh my dear father! What a horrible vow have you made without taking into consideration its consequences. You have not understood its gains or losses; you did not weigh its pros and cons.

[You have put my entire life on stake just to prove that you are very truthful to your words—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252. But this is an utter nonsense; it is not practical. You have not consulted me, when it is I who am directly affected.] (2)

[Note—Sita admonishes her father silently in her heart for his lack of foresightedness. He had made the breaking of the bow the sole criterion for deciding who would marry Sita. Breaking of a bow could judge the candidate's physical strength and abilities, but it was no judgement for his other qualities, such as his personal character, his nature, his temperament, his intelligence, his wisdom, his education, his family background, his habits and likings, and so on. Did he ever take into consideration what would happen if some rascal, a wicked person, a pervert, a drunkard or a promiscuous man was able to break the bow; would he like his daughter to be married to such a person? If not, then isn't his vow tying her marriage to the breaking of the bow nonsense and illogical?]

सचिव सभय सिख देइ न कोई । बुध समाज बड़ अनुचित होई ॥ ३ ॥

saciva sabhaya sikha dē'i na kōī. budha samāja baṛa anucita hōī. 3.

The chief minister is afraid of annoying you, and so are the rest of those who call themselves wise and learned in the society, because no one has the guts to rise up and

advice you that whatever is happening, or is being allowed to happen, is extremely uncalled for and is most pitiful, unjust, improper, inappropriate, impractical and unwise.

[There is another way of reading this verse as follow—“The chief minister is afraid of giving appropriate advice because he fears of annoying the king. None of the others are also gathering courage to give proper advice. It’s a great pity that a great injustice is being perpetrated upon me openly in a society that prides itself of its members who are expected to be wise and act wisely in a rationale and well-thought out way. But it seems to me that all wisdom and caution has been thrown to the winds in my case because such an impractical and improper thing is being allowed to happen in front of all without anyone raising a voice of sanity and opposing this grave injustice and wrong that is being done.”] (3)

[Note—The same thing was said by Sita’s mother to her friend—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256.

Sita curses under her breath that her father wishes to keep her unmarried out of some old-fashioned notion of being true to one’s words, no matter how nonsensical that ‘word’ may be. At least she should now be given a last chance to make her choice and choose her groom, especially when it is clear that no one has been able to marry her in accordance to her father’s wishes or vow of breaking the bow. How ridiculous it is to let her suffer for life just because her father had made an absurd vow by tying her entire future and happiness to an old and rusty bow.

Even if he had erred in his decision to call-off her marriage just because no one could break the bow, at least now his chief minister or his other court advisors must step forward and tell him what to do that would be proper and fit under changed situation. After all, this is the very function, a moral obligation and a duty of a chief minister or other advisors of any king to give him sane and practical advice if they find that the king is making a mistake or taking a wrong decision. If they do not do so out of fear of annoying the king, then they fail to live up to their expectations, and must be dismissed and punished. It means they are all sycophants, yes-men. A king who allows himself to be surrounded by such ‘yes-men’ is bound to come to ruin. Sita wonders, why does her father not realise this?

Why aren’t these so-called wise men and intelligent advisors not taking the king into confidence and fulfilling their responsibilities to fearlessly tell him that it is not proper to keep his daughter unmarried just because every candidate has failed the eligibility test that the king had decided arbitrarily without taking the pros and cons into consideration—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 above? Why has no one got the courage to stand up and tell the king that in all sooth it is a good wisdom for a king not to be rigid in his views or stance because one must be practical in his approach and change one’s course of action or decision to suit changed circumstances, and to rework one’s expectations and objectives in accordance with the current situation? Being stubborn and adamant and inflexible is not a sign of wisdom. Great kings are supposed to be quick to adapt themselves to changed situations, whether it is in the battle-field or in dealing with the administrative and political affairs of the kingdom. Rigidity makes one stale and outdated; adaptability and flexibility infuses vibrancy and life. If one does not change and adapts according to the changing times and circumstances, one leads to one’s own ruin, and no one else, not even the gods, is to be blamed for the misfortunes that come in the wake of being stubborn, adamant and rigid.

Now, this is Sita’s perspective. But from the viewpoint of the chief minister and other advisors of the king it would have been overstepping their jurisdiction if they had intervened and requested Janak to let Sita make the choice of her husband. This is because the marriage of a king’s daughter is his family matter and his personal affair, and

not the affair of the state or the kingdom for which they have been appointed to advise the king. If the king made a mistake in making a decision related to the affairs of the state then the chief minister as well as other advisors would have been within their rights to stand up and tell the king that what he is planning to do was wrong. But they may be rebuked by the king if they unnecessarily tried to act smart in matters that are king's family and personal affairs.

Besides this point, the king had not sought their opinion or advice with respect to his decision of making the breaking of the bow the sole criterion to choose the groom for his daughter Sita, and therefore it was prudent for them to keep quiet. In matters of state they would be within their jurisdiction to convey their ideas to the king even if not being asked specifically, but in personal affairs it was wise to keep quiet.]

कहँ धनु कुलिसहु चाहि कठोरा । कहँ स्यामल मृदुगात किसोरा ॥ ४ ॥

kaham̐ dhanu kulisahu cāhi kaṭhōrā. kaham̐ syāmala mṛdugāta kisōrā. 4.

On the one hand is the bow which is harder than 'Kulis' (Vajra, the weapon of Indra, the king of gods; said to be made of the hardest material in existence), and on the other hand is this dark-complexioned prince with a delicate frame and immature (young) age. [It is highly absurd to force such a delicate prince to go and lift a bow that is so stern and unyielding that it has just a few moments earlier shamed thousands of strong warriors by not moving an inch from its place inspite of their making strenuous efforts to the best of their abilities.] (4)

[Note—Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/78, stanza no. 3, and verse no. 1/70, stanza no. 3.

In other words, there is no match between them. It is not wise and proper to pitch two opponents against each other if there is a glaring mismatch between their abilities and qualifications. For instance, there is no sense in making a doctor stand up against an engineer to debate on an engineering subject, or an engineer to argue with a doctor on a medical topic.

All the earlier competitors were mature veteran warriors with muscular, well-built bodies. But Lord Ram is of a young age and has a delicate frame. It will be incongruous to imagine that he would be able to lift a bow that is extremely hard and huge, especially when thousands of strong warriors have tried their might but failed to move it an inch—refer: (i) Chaupai line nos. 12 that precede Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 256.]

बिधि केहि भाँति धरौं उर धीरा । सिरस सुमन कन बेधिअ हीरा ॥ ५ ॥

bidhi kēhi bhām̐ti dharaum̐ ura dhīrā. sirasa sumana kana bēdhi'a hīrā. 5.

I am dismayed, distressed, in a great dilemma, and feeling flustered. Oh Creator, I don't know how to keep my wits together and gather sufficient courage to maintain my mental balance, poise and calm.

Say, is it ever possible for the pointed end of a tender Siras flower (of a family of trees similar to the Shisham tree, the Indian rosewood tree; Latin name *Dalbergia sisu*) to be able to pierce a piece of diamond* (which is the toughest thing in the world)? (5)

[Note—In this verse, Lord Ram is likened to this flower, and the bow to the diamond. Even as it is ridiculous to imagine that the soft pointed end of the flower could pierce through the diamond, it is also equally ridiculous to imagine that Lord Ram, who has a delicate body, would be able to lift the rusty huge bow and overcome its hardness in order to break it.

Sita wonders, ‘So, why are these people putting this lovely prince to shame; why do they want to humiliate him in this abject manner? My fate is decided by the absurd vow my father has made. I will have to remain unmarried for life; it’s my bad fate. But what is the great idea in insulting this innocent prince and subjecting him to public insult by making him attempt to lift a bow which apparently he won’t be successfully able to do because of the obvious mismatch between the physical appearances of the two—for, Lord Ram is of a delicate frame, while the bow is heavy, rusted, old, ugly and huge in size.’

These verses show the extent of affection and love that Sita had developed for Lord Ram. A true lover would never want the object of his or her adoration to be subjected to any trouble or humiliation for his or her sake. A true lover would rather suffer himself or herself than allowing or wanting the object of adoration to undergo any sort of suffering.

Sita in effect laments that her fate is already doomed, but why should Lord Ram, the object of her adoration and affection, be put to shame unnecessarily for no fault of his. The Lord has not even shown any desire to participate in the competition; even when his brother Laxman vented his anger at Janak, the Lord had calmed him down and ordered him to sit down—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

But when his Guru sage Vishwamitra ordered him to go and break the bow, he was left with no choice but to obey his Guru’s command. But this is injustice and improper. Just like my whimsical father who has made me a laughing stock in this world by making an absurd vow, the sage is also making Lord Ram an object of laughter by forcing him to go and break the bow though apparently there is no physical possibility of the Lord being able to lift and break it because he is delicate while the bow is exceptionally heavy and stern.

*One important thing to note here is this: In the previous verse, the bow is compared to the Vajra of Indra (“Kulis”), and here it is compared to the diamond. The underlying quality in both the Vajra and the diamond is ‘their unbreakability and formidably high strength’. They are the toughest things in existence.]

सकल सभा कै मति भै भोरी । अब मोहि संभुचाप गति तोरी ॥ ६ ॥

निज जड़ता लोगन्ह पर डारी । होहि हरुअ रघुपतिहि निहारी ॥ ७ ॥

sakala sabhā kai mati bhai bhōrī. aba mōhi sambhucāpa gati tōrī. 6.

nija jaṛatā lōganha para ḍārī. hōhi haru'a raghupatihi nihārī. 7.

[Now, as a last resort, Sita pleads with the ‘Bow’ itself as follows--]

The whole assembly has forfeited its senses; every single person seems to have lost wisdom. In this frightening scenario, oh Lord Shiva’s bow, I seek refuge in you. [I surrender before you and pray to you to help me.] (6)

You have already cast your legendary heaviness upon the people (by dulling their senses and making them inert). So, please now become light as soon as you see Lord Ram (i.e. please show mercy upon Lord Ram and shed your stubbornness for his sake; please become light in the view of the fact that the Lord himself is so delicate). (7)

[Note—In these lines, the ‘bow’ has been deified as a ‘divine entity’ that has great powers to decide what to and what not to do, as well as to oblige someone who prays to it. It is no longer an ordinary bow, but a ‘Bow’ with mystical powers. And it is also not wrong to assume this ‘bow’ to be a divine entity because it is the ‘bow of Lord Shiva’.

Sita is so upset mentally that she has begged all and sundry to somehow help her overcome her miseries, but everyone seems powerless and helpless. Previously she has already begged with Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh and other gods. Then she has cursed her father and his advisors. Failing to evoke sympathy and empathy from anyone, she now turns to the ‘bow’ and begs it to help her. We shall soon discover that once she did it, the mystical ‘bow’ of Lord Shiva immediately obliged her: it became as light as a feather, and as fragile and soft as a lotus stem so that Lord Ram would easily lift and break it as if it was a trifle matter.

Sita pleads with the ‘bow’ to become appropriately light so that it can match the delicate nature of Lord Ram. She tells the bow—“Oh bow! You are so hard and stern. Have a look at Lord Ram; he has such a soft touch of his hands. Won’t you be ashamed of yourself if your rough surface injures the Lord’s hands? I don’t request you to break; what I am begging of you is simply to become light and soft so that the Lord is not hurt when he touches you. You are Lord Shiva’s bow, and Shiva is a merciful Lord. Say then, how can you be so stern with Lord Ram whom even your own master, Shiva, adores Lord Ram so much as to enshrine him in his heart as his revered Lord—for instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51, or (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82 amongst many other examples? Hence, please be gracious to become light and soft as soon as you see Lord Ram near you.”]

अति परिताप सीय मन माहीं । लव निमेष जुग सय सम जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

ati paritāpa siya mana māhīm. lava nimēṣa juga saya sama jāhīm. 8.

Sita’s heart was very agitated and tormented. Even a second appeared to be as long as an era (“Yuga”) for her. [Time was passing too slowly for her; each second appeared to be as long as an age, weighing heavily on her mind as she waited with bated breath for her fate to be decided. She was on her edge during the time Lord Ram rose from his seat till the time he broke the bow.] (8)

दो०. प्रभुहि चितइ पुनि चितव महि राजत लोचन लोल ।
खेलत मनसिज मीन जुग जनु बिधु मंडल डोल ॥ २५८ ॥

dōhā.

prabhuhi cita'i puni citava mahi rājata lōcana lōla.
khēlata manasija mīna juga janu bidhu maṇḍala ḍōla. 258.

Sita was repeatedly glancing first at the Lord and then at the ground in quick succession. This created an impression that two lovely fish of Kamdeo (cupid) are swimming around a pail represented by the full disc of the moon. (Doha no. 258)

[Note—Sita’s eyes explored the Lord’s lovely face by gliding over it, and then she felt abashed because the whole assembly was watching her each move. So, she immediately

looked down towards the ground. Unable to resist the charm of the Lord's countenance and her internal urge to look at the beautiful sight of the Lord's image as much as she could while still there was time and chance, she would lift her eyes from the ground to look at Lord Ram once again. A storm was blowing in her mind and heart. She was overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection on the one hand, and with uncertainty and helplessness on the other hand. She was unable to either fix her eyes on the Lord or on the ground. For one moment she looked up at Lord Ram, and at the other moment she lowered her eyes to look at the ground. This up-and-down movement of Sita's eyes continued unabated, prompting Tulsidas to write this Doha.

Sita's face was beautiful and fair complexioned like the face of the full moon which is here likened to a silver pale full of Amrit, the elixir of bliss and happiness, while her eyes are compared to two fish of the god of beauty and love, known as Kamdeo (cupid). When her eyes constantly flickered and shifted from one point to another as she once looked at Lord Ram, allowing her eyes to hover over the Lord's charming face for some time, and then to the ground for some moments, only to lift the eyes again to look at the Lord's lovely countenance, and this process went on repeating again and again, Tulsidas, the poet, compares it with two fish of Kamdeo (cupid) which were moving around playfully in a silvery-pail full of Amrit for which the bright disc of the full moon is used as a metaphor.

In effect, this 'full moon' refers to the lovely fair-complexioned face of Sita, and the 'two fish of Kamdeo (cupid)' to her eyes. The reason for citing 'Kamdeo (cupid)' is that Sita was overcome with affection and love for Lord Ram, and she longed to marry him.]

चौ०. गिरा अलिनि मुख पंकज रोकी । प्रगट न लाज निसा अवलोकी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

girā alini mukha pañkaja rōkī. pragaṭa na lāja nisā avalōkī. 1.

Sita could not say a word out of shyness and shame. It appeared that her voice was held captive in her lotus-like mouth just like the black-bee does not gather courage to venture out during the night.

[The bee becomes active during the daytime when there is light and the lotus flowers open up. The reason is that the bee searches for nectar of the flower to quench its thirst, and the majority of flowers open their petals only during the day. This fact is already pointed out with reference to the lotus flower in Baal Kand, Doha no. 254 above.]

(1)

[Note—It is to be observed here that Sita wishes to speak and let the assembly know how she feels, what she wants and what injustice is being done to her without as much as giving her a chance to put forward her views, especially when the issue at hand directly affects her entire future life. But hesitation takes the better hold of her and forces her to keep quiet. She is reluctant to speak up as it would be completely at odds with the established tradition of society which forbades a girl, especially a girl who is about to be married and is standing in the middle of an assembly full of people watching her intently, to speak out boldly in public. It would be deemed to be scandalous and sacrilegious; it would put her entire family to shame and public scorn; it would embarrass her father,

herself and the rest of the family; it would be high indiscipline, extremely indecent and violative of established protocol.

There were thousands of invited kings and princes in attendance; what impression would they get about her character? So, reluctantly and out of compulsion she desisted from speaking.]

लोचन जलु रह लोचन कोना । जैसें परम कृपन कर सोना ॥ २ ॥

lōcana jalu raha lōcana kōnā. jaisēm parama kṛpana kara sōnā. 2.

Tears did well up in her eyes, but they remained confined to the corners of her eyes (as if they had dried up even before they could emerge from eye and roll down her cheeks) just like a miser's gold remains buried in some remote or obscure corner. (2)

[Note—Sita held back her tears. She literally fought back her tears. Onlookers did not see even a single drop of tear on her face, and therefore no one could judge the horribly agonizing state of her mind. People thought that Sita is not affected or bothered by the development that no one has been able to break the bow, that a dark future stares her on the face. No one in the assembly could have a hint of the great emotional storm that was blowing in her mind and heart. Had tears flowed down her cheeks, some in the assembly would have had shown empathy for her and gather courage to intercede on her behalf to ask her father Janak to at least find out why Sita is weeping or what causes her discomfort. It would have been simply cruel and inhuman to let a helpless girl stand in the middle an assembly with hawkish eyes devouring her and letting her cry inconsolably without showing any mercy and compassion. So at least someone in the assembly would have stood up on her behalf and taken up the issue with king Janak. May be the king himself, or Sita's mother or the chief minister or some other high-ranking courtier would have noticed her weeping and realize that she is in great discomfort, ask her the reason for her weeping, and then some solution could have been found.

But though it would have been in Sita's favour if she had wept openly, it would have meant that she has a weak heart, a feeble mind, and is emotionally immature. Weeping and sobbing in public is certainly not a trait of someone with a strong mind and personality. Sita did not want to create an unsavory scene bordering on drama that would make her a butt of laughter in this world. She was already in great misery, and if there were jeers and cat-calls if she showed any sign of weakness of personality by letting the tears drop from her eyes, the resultant agony and shame would be unbearable.

So Sita fought back her tears and soaked them in the corners of her eyes before they could roll down her cheeks.

Sita was not only fighting to hold back her tears but also the strong desire to speak and let everyone present there know what she wants as has been said in the previous verse no. 1.

Her determination not to let the tears come out and make her mental agonies and torments public is compared in this verse to a miser who tries his best to hide his gold from public knowledge by tucking it in some secret place. Sita wishes to put up a brave face that would make her look dignified and as one who possesses a strong personality.]

सकुची व्याकुलता बड़ि जानी । धरि धीरजु प्रतीति उर आनी ॥ ३ ॥

sakucī byākulatā baḍī jānī. dhari dhīraju pratīti ura ānī. 3.

Finding her self extremely nervous and agitated, Sita thought that it was prudent and wise to keep her mind calm and have courage in her heart (instead of fretting and fuming in vain). She decided instead to rely on the strength of her (true) love for the Lord (as it is said that true love always wins against the most severe of odds). (3)

[Note—Sita was perplexed because she did not know what to and what not to do. Fretting and fuming, worrying and getting anxious, weeping and sobbing, or cursing and muttering angrily under the breath—none would help in any way. As far as requesting gods and goddesses to intervene, she has already done it.

So, the only way now is to have courage and reassure her self that there is still chance of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying her because it has been always said that true love and devotion for the Lord do not go in vain and are sure to produce positive results in her favour (refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precedes Doha no. 259 below that expressly endorses this view).

Hence she thought over the matter and decided that it is wiser to keep calm and surrender her self to Lord Ram and rely on the Lord's basic nature of honouring the virtues of love and devotion in his devotees (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram has told Sabari, the old woman who was patiently waiting in the deep forest for the Lord for a long time for the Lord to come to her hermitage and provide her with liberation).

Not only this, the Lord has declared that he will give unconditional protection to those who, after having lost all other hopes in this world for solace and succour, have come to him for protection (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48 where the Lord welcomed Vibhishan, the younger brother of the demon king Ravana, warmly when he was insulted and kicked out of his kingdom by his elder brother in a fit of rage).

Sita's condition was no better: no one was coming to her aid. Her own father had become instrumental in her torments, what to talk of others. Her mother, ministers of the kingdom, their Guru (royal priest, Satanand) and the rest of those who she had thought were her well-wishers had now become mute spectators and dumb. So, the only route open for Sita to escape this horror is to surrender at the holy feet of the Lord himself, and leave her fate upon him. This is what she has done now. Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 below which clearly endorse the views elicited here.]

तन मन बचन मोर पनु साचा । रघुपति पद सरोज चितु राचा ॥ ४ ॥

तौ भगवानु सकल उर बासी । करिहि मोहि रघुबर कै दासी ॥ ५ ॥

tana mana bacana mōra panu sēcā. raghupati pada sarōja citu rēcā. 4.

tau bhagavānu sakala ura bāsī. karihi mōhi raghubara kai dāsī. 5.

If my vow (of surrendering myself to Lord Ram for the rest of my life, of accepting only the Lord as my life-partner and husband) is truthful, honest and sincere in all respects involving my 'Tana' (literally the 'body', implying one's physical being, physical existence, and deeds or actions of the physical body), my 'Mana' (thoughts of the mind and emotions of the heart) and my 'Bachan' (words that are spoken), and if I have true affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Raghupati (Ram) [4], then, Oh Lord God

(“Bhagwan”) who lives in the heart of all living beings (and hence knows the secret thoughts and emotions of all; nothing is hidden from him), let me please become a loyal maid of the Lord. [The word used in the text is “Daasi” which literally translates into a female attendant who serves her lord faithfully and loyally, with great sense of servitude, for the rest of her life as if she was under a bond to serve him. But here the word means a ‘loyal wife’ and not a slave. In other words, Sita prays that she should be blessed and allowed to serve Lord Ram diligently and faithfully as if she was his maid, not as a bonded slave but as a loyal and loving wife who finds pleasure in serving her husband, who does not treat this service as a burden on her, but as a privilege.] [5] (4-5)*

{*These two verses can also be read slightly differently as follows—“If my determination to serve Lord Ram with my body, my heart and mind, and by my words (i.e. what I speak) is honest and truthful, then I am sure that the Lord God, who is privy to all the personal thoughts and emotions of every single living being because he lives in the innerself of all, will enable me to serve the holy lotus-like feet of Raghupati (Lord Ram) for the rest of my life.” (4-5)}

[Note—Sita has finally sought succour in the strength of her own faith in the power of her devotion for Lord Ram and a desire to completely surrender herself for the rest of her life at the holy feet of the Lord. Such is the mystical power of having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram that where all other methods had failed to give any trace of relief to Sita, as soon as she invoked this sole method of Bhakti by declaring to her self that she would think and serve no one else in her life except Lord Ram, peace and comfort came to her.

Not only this, as has been noted in earlier verses, this was the only factor for Lord Ram to decide whether or not he should break the bow. So, as soon as the Lord learnt that Sita has stopped praying to this god and that goddess, and has completely surrendered herself to him, the Lord lost no time to snap the bow into two pieces— refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 below.]

जेहि कें जेहि पर सत्य सनेहू । सो तेहि मिलइ न कछु संदेहू ॥ ६ ॥

jēhi kēm jēhi para satya sanēhū. sō tēhi mila'i na kachu sandēhū. 6.

There is no trace of doubt in the ancient adage that a one surely gets something for which one has sincere love and affection, which one longs for, yearns for, and for which one has a strong desire.’ (6)

[Note—This adage has very practical usage. If a man is sincere about his objective in life, he is sure to make an all-out effort to achieve it. His efforts to reach his goal in life won’t be half-hearted or driven by formalities; they would be diligent and forceful and honest. And this is surely going to produce positive results for him.

Even Lord Shiva has endorsed this view when he had advised the gods to pray to Lord Vishnu right at the place where they were present at the moment instead of worrying to go to the heavenly abode of the Lord searching for him. Shiva said—“If you have true and sincere devotion and love for the Lord then he will manifest himself right here. I know of this fact; I vouch for its truthfulness.” Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 185.

Sita has full confidence in herself and her conviction that if her surrender to the Lord is true and complete in every sense then there is no doubt that Lord Ram would accept her. This is very clear in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 109.]

प्रभु तन चितइ प्रेम तन ठाना । कृपानिधान राम सबु जाना ॥ ७ ॥
सियहि बिलोकि तकेउ धनु कैसें । चितव गरुरु लघु ब्यालहि जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu tana cita'i prēma tana ṭhānā. kṛpānidhāna rāma sabu jānā. 7.
siyahi bilōki takē'u dhanu kaisēm. citava garuru laghu byālahi jaisēm. 8.

Then she (Sita) looked at the physical form (body) of Lord Ram and made a stern vow of love and affection for the Lord. The merciful Lord Ram, who is all-knowing and omniscient, became aware of every thing (i.e. the Lord saw that Sita has finally committed herself to him, and there is no more any doubt in her faith and love for him). (7)

The Lord gave Sita a final glance (as if to assure her not to worry any longer), and then he looked at the bow in the same fashion as Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu, here meaning an eagle or a kite) looks down contemptuously at a small serpent.

[The kite or the eagle swoops down on the reptile as soon as it sees the latter lying on the ground. Once the bird decides to make a kill for the serpent, the latter cannot escape no matter what trick it tries because the bird swoops down so swiftly on it from the sky that the poor serpent has no time to escape and hide anywhere.] (8)

[Note—These two verses clearly indicate that by this time Lord Ram has reached the bow and is contemplating his next move. Things are happening quickly, but their narration takes some time.

When Lord Ram discovered that Sita has pledged her loyalty and her own self at the feet of the Lord, and that she has made a vow to live up to her determination to serve the Lord and be faithful in her love for him for the rest of her life come what may, he decided to remove the only hurdle that stood between his devotee, Sita, having access to him.

The shape of the bow lying on the platform resembled a huge python sleeping on the ground. This is why a serpent is used as a metaphor here. Lord Ram did not waste any time in lifting, stringing and breaking the bow just like the fraction of time that elapses between the instant the kite or the eagle sees the serpent and it actually swooping down and scooping it away in its claws.]

दो०. लखन लखेउ रघुबंसमनि ताकेउ हर कोदंडु ।
पुलकि गात बोले बचन चरन चापि ब्रह्मांडु ॥ २५९ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana lakhē'u raghubansamani tākē'u hara kōdaṇḍu.
pulaki gāta bōlē bacana carana cāpi brahmāṇḍu. 259.

Laxman saw that the Lord (Ram), who was like a 'gem of the Raghu dynasty' ("raghubansamani"), was looking (gazing) intently at the bow (and was preparing to break it)¹.

So he (Laxman) became thrilled in his body (i.e. he became excited and hoped for the best)². He pressed the universe ("brahmāṇḍu") under his feet³, and warned (the

entities listed below in the forthcoming verses to become alert so that the world does not split and collapse by the shock waves that would be generated when Lord Ram breaks the bow)—(Doha no. 259)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram stood close to the bow, he considered it carefully. Many thoughts were flying past his mind: such as that he should first and foremost silently offer his prayers to Lord Shiva and seek his nod to break the latter's bow; he should closely examine the bow and contemplate upon the best strategy to be adopted to tackle it; he should keep in mind and consider the long-term consequences of breaking this bow because the Lord was fully acquainted with Janak's vow that it would automatically mean marriage with Sita but he wasn't sure how his own father, king Dasrath, would take this news as he was unaware of the equation between him and Janak; what would be done if the failed kings rose in revolt and there was a battle and bloodshed; whether or not Sita would be compatible with him or the other members of his family; and so on and so forth. Many such factors were weighing heavily on Lord Ram's mind simultaneously during those crucial moments when he stood gazing at the bow. He had but little choice though—because his Guru, sage Vishwamitra, had ordered him to go and break the bow, and defying the Guru's orders was unthinkable for him no matter what befell as a result.

²Laxman was a personified form of the qualities of bravery, valour and strength. On other occasions also, when the chance came for Lord Ram to exhibit these virtues, Laxman has felt excited and thrilled. One such example is found when Lord Ram has raised his bow to dry the ocean when the latter was adamantly not giving Lord Ram and his army of monkeys a passage to cross over to Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 58.

Another reason for Laxman to get excited was that his feeling of being insulted by Janak when the king had declared that the world has no strong warrior because no one could break the bow, even without giving any of the two brothers a chance, would now be vindicated.

³Laxman was a personified form of Seshnath, the thousand-hooded celestial serpent who is believed to hold the world aloft on its hood. In other words, it was the duty of Laxman to make sure that the world does not tumble over and get destroyed by the huge waves of shock that would be generated when the bow of Lord Shiva would break into two, and compounded when Lord Ram throws the broken pieces onto the ground with a horrifying thud.

Besides this, there was the fear that as soon as it is lifted from its pedestal, the earth would lose its balance and may roll over because the bow was extremely heavy and its lifting by Lord Ram would shift the center of gravity many points.

So, Laxman symbolically put his legs on the top of this ball-like universe to prevent it from rolling over and obliterating life.]

चौ०. दिसिकुंजरहु कमठ अहि कोला । धरहु धरनि धरि धीर न डोला ॥ १ ॥
रामु चहहिं संकर धनु तोरा । होहु सजग सुनि आयसु मोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

disikunṛarahu kamaṭṭha ahi kōlā. dharahu dharani dhari dhīra na ḍōlā. 1.
rāmu cahahim saṅkara dhanu tōrā. hōhu sajaga suni āyasu mōrā. 2.

[Laxman alerted the following entities as Lord Ram prepared to lift and break the bow—] ‘Oh Diggajs¹, the Tortoise², the Serpent³, and the Varaaha⁴! Hold the earth carefully so that it does not topple or roll over.* (1)

Become alert on my command as Lord Ram wants to (or is preparing to) break Lord Shiva’s bow. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to:--(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand—stanza no. 4-5 of verse no. 1/90; stanza no. 1 of verse no. 1/92 etc.; and (iii) Janki Mangal, verse no. 98.

The Diggajs—These Diggajs are eight in number and they are said to be strong elephants which support the earth from eight directions or corners. The word ‘Diggaj’ itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular. According to the Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as ‘Saarvabhoum’; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Suprateek or Saptateek’; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Airaawat’; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pundareek’; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as ‘Vaaman’; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Kumud’; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Anjan’; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pushpa-danta’.

However, according to Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar’s sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named ‘Virupaaksha’, (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named ‘Mahapadma’, (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named ‘Saumnas’ (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named ‘Bhadra’.

²The Tortoise (Kamath)—This is said to be one of the forms of Lord Vishnu who holds the earth on the back of his shell so that it does not sink into the fathomless pit of the nether world and get lost for ever. It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

³The Serpent (Ahi)—This is the celestial serpent with a thousand hoods which holds the earth on its hoods. Its name is Seshnath. Laxman is believed to be a manifestation of Seshnath—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 197. Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath as it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir-sagar.

⁴The Varaaha (Kolaa)—The Boar manifestation of Lord Vishnu. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

*The above four entities hold the earth from below in the following sequence—at the very bottom is Varaaha (the Boar), then comes Seshnath (the Serpent), above the latter is the Tortoise (Kachhap; Kurma), and on the top are the Diggajs (the Elephants).]

चाप समीप रामु जब आए । नर नारिन्ह सुर सुकृत मनाए ॥ ३ ॥

cāpa samīpa rāmu jaba ā'ē. nara nārinha sura sukr̥ta manā'ē. 3.

When Lord Ram came near the bow, all the men and women invoked the blessings (help) of the gods and staked all the rewards that were due to them for the good and meritorious deeds they had ever done in their lives (so that the Lord successfully breaks the bow)¹. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255 which endorse this view.

The citizens are perplexed by the magnitude of the obstacle that Lord Ram had to face. The following verse nos. 4-7 enumerate the hurdles that have all teamed up to oppose Lord Ram.]

सब कर संसउ अरु अग्यानू । मंद महीपन्ह कर अभिमानू ॥ ४ ॥
 भृगुपति केरि गरब गरुआई । सुर मुनिबरन्ह केरि कदराई ॥ ५ ॥
 सिय कर सोचु जनक पछितावा । रानिन्ह कर दारुन दुख दावा ॥ ६ ॥

saba kara sansa'u aru agyānū. manda mahīpanha kara abhimānū. 4.
 bhr̥gupati kēri garaba garu'ā'ī. sura munibaranha kēri kadarā'ī. 5.
 siya kara sōcu janaka pachitāvā. rāninha kara dārūna dukha dāvā. 6.

The doubts and ignorance of all those who had assembled there (who did not know the truth of Lord Ram being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and of Sita being that of Laxmi, the divine couple whose union in their human forms was merely a formality that was destined to happen), the arrogance and vanity of foolish kings (that no one is stronger than them, that if they could not break the bow then no one else would, and that they would not allow Sita to be married to anyone else even if he manages to break the bow) [4], ---

--- the pretensions and ego of sage Parashuram (“Brighu-pati”) about his own strength and invincibility (as well as being the one who finds pleasure in punishing the Kshatriya race, the warrior race to which Lord Ram belonged), the fear and apprehension of gods and sages (that in case Lord Ram is not able to break the bow, what would happen to Sita, and more importantly, about the long-term objective of Lord Vishnu to kill the cruel demons in his human as Lord Ram when their king, Ravana, would steal Sita and the Lord would find an excuse to wage a war to liberate her, and in the process eliminate the terror of the demons) [5], ---

--- the worries in the mind and heart of Sita (which made her pray to so many gods and goddesses), the lamentations and regret of Janak (about the rigid vow he had made, a vow that proved to be nonsensical and impractical, a vow that became instrumental in causing so much pain and agony to all concerned, such as Sita, the royal family members, the citizens etc.), the horrifying agony in the heart of Sita's mother who was literally burning in its fire [6], (4-6) ---

संभुचाप बड़ बोहितु पाई । चढ़े जाइ सब संगु बनाई ॥ ७ ॥
 राम बाहुबल सिंधु अपारू । चहत पारु नहिं कोउ कड़हारू ॥ ८ ॥

sambhucāpa baṛa bōhita pā'ī. caṛhē jā'ī saba saṅgu banā'ī. 7.
rāma bāhubala sindhu apārū. caḥata pāru nahim kō'u kaṛahārū. 8.

--- All of the above have personified themselves as formidable obstacles and have teamed together to board the huge boat represented by the great bow of Lord Shiva [7] ---

--- in their attempt to cross over or measure the fathomless ocean represented by the might and powers of Lord Ram's arms [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Chaupai line nos. 4-8 should be read together to make the meaning clear. The citizens are worried that all the negative factors listed in verse nos. 4 to 6 have formed a coterie to oppose, challenge and tease Lord Ram.

Here, the strength of Lord Ram's arms is compared to an ocean that is so vast that it cannot be measured, but the entities mentioned here are doing their best to prove themselves superior to the Lord and symbolically defeat him by teaming together to challenge the authority and powers of the Lord successfully, using the bow as a weapon. If Lord Ram could not lift and break the bow it would mean that he has been defeated by his opponents who are hell-bent to prevent Lord Ram from marrying Sita.

If the strength of Lord Ram's arms is compared to the vast ocean that is measureless in length, then these opponents are compared to the passengers who have boarded a ship represented by the bow to cross this ocean to prove to the latter that it is wrong to say that the 'ocean is measureless' as they have been able to cross it and find its other end. One cannot find the other end of something that is 'measureless', but when one reaches the other shore of the ocean it means that he has symbolically 'measured' the length of the ocean, from the end where he boarded the ship to the end where he disembarked from it.]

दो०. राम बिलोके लोग सब चित्र लिखे से देखि ।
चितई सीय कृपायतन जानी बिकल बिसेषि ॥ २६० ॥

dōhā.

rāma bilōkē lōga saba citra likhē sē dēkhi.
cita'ī siya kṛpāyatana jānī bikala bisēṣi. 260.

Lord Ram glanced at all the people and saw that all of them are in an immobile and transfixed state as if they are part of a picture.

Then the merciful Lord looked at Sita and found her in a specially (i.e. more than anyone else) agonized, restless and perplexed state. (Doha no. 260)

[Note—This Doha links with Chaupai line no. 8 of Doha no. 259, and with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows below.

The reason for Sita being in an extremely agitated state of mind was that it is she who would be directly affected by the outcome of this bow breaking competition. The few moments that were left between the time Lord Ram had yet not touched the bow and when he had actually broken the bow looked like an interminable period of time for Sita. Her heart must have been beating rapidly, her body perspiring profusely and her head reeling under the tremendous nervous and emotional pressure through which she was passing in those crucial moments of her life.

The entire assembly was on edge; the people were sitting or standing transfixed as if in a daze. Even their eyelids stopped flapping and they held their breath in anticipation of

some miraculous event that was about to occur. There must have been a total pin-drop silence in the extensive arena which was abuzz a while ago with whisperings and mutterings.

The scene is aptly summarized by comparing it to a picture where none of the characters move or show any sign of life.]

चौ०. देखी बिपुल बिकल बैदेही । निमिष बिहात कलप सम तेही ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhī bipula bikala baidēhī. nimiṣa bihāta kalapa sama tēhī. 1.

Lord Ram observed that Vaidehi (Sita) was extremely agitated and perturbed. A second appeared to be a long era for her (because time seemed to come to a standstill in those crucial moments of her life) (1)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 260 above. This verse is an extension of this Doha and seeks to establish a bridge between its previous events and what is to follow next.]

तृषित बारि बिनु जो तनु त्यागा । मुँ करइ का सुधा तड़ागा ॥ २ ॥
का बरषा सब कृषी सुखानें । समय चुकें पुनि का पछितानें ॥ ३ ॥

trṣita bāri binu jō tanu tyāgā. mu'ēṁ kara'i kā sudhā tarāgā. 2.
kā baraṣā saba kṛṣī sukhānēm. samaya cukēm puni kā pachitānēm. 3.

[The Lord thought to himself—] If someone dies for want of water to drink, then what is the use and sense of giving his dead body an access to a pond of water (or 'nectar', because "Sudha" means 'an elixir of eternity known as Amrit, and "Tadaka" means a pond¹) to quench its thirst? (2)

Similarly, what is the use of having rains once the fields dry up and the harvest is destroyed?

Say, what is the use of regretting later on if the right time for doing something passes away; or what sense does it make in not taking timely action and repenting for it later on once the window of opportunity is closed?² (3)

[Note—Here, after observing the precarious condition of Sita, Lord Ram decides to take action immediately. We have read earlier that he wanted to make sure that Sita has sincerely surrendered herself to him, and her devotion for him was complete and doubtless. But now the Lord discovered that she was on the verge of collapse, and if he delayed in breaking the bow much longer then in all probabilities she would faint. So, there was no point in postponing the breaking of the bow any longer.

The above two adages are time tested doctrines that simply mean that one must take timely action.

¹The word "Sudha" literally means an elixir of life that provides eternity. So it may mean 'water' as well as 'Amrit', the nectar drunk by gods to remain free from death. This

Amrit has a mystical power to prevent death, but it cannot revive a body that is already dead. However, in the context in which this word is used in this verse, both the meanings fit well. That is, it's no sense to pour Amrit or water over a dead body if the person dies of thirst for want of water.

²Refer also to: (i) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/7, stanza no. 2, line no. 4; and (ii) Dohawali, verse no. 444.]

अस जियँ जानि जानकी देखी । प्रभु पुलके लखि प्रीति बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

asa jiyam' jāni jānakī dēkhī. prabhu pulakē lakhi prīti bisēṣī. 4.

Contemplating thus in his heart (that there is no point in delaying any further as each passing moment is becoming unbearable for Sita and the rest of the people), the Lord glanced one more time finally at Sita. The Lord felt thrilled (i.e. fully contented and satisfied in his heart) when he observed that Sita's affection (as well as her devotion, loyalty and love) for the Lord is remarkable (i.e. it is complete, undiluted and undoubtful). (4)

[Note—Refer: Janki Mangal, verse nos. 103—104 also.

We will note that Lord Ram had decided to accept Sita by breaking the bow only after ensuring himself that her affection, devotion and surrender to the Lord is complete and unquestionable. The lesson to be drawn from these lines is that the Lord first tests his devotee's 'Bhakti' (devotion) and sincerity in seeking the Lord's grace and refuge before going all-out to help him. And once the devotee is able to convince the Lord about his integrity and sincerity, he has nothing to worry any longer as it now becomes the Lord's responsibility to take full care of him.]

गुरहि प्रनामु मनहिं मन कीन्हा । अति लाघवँ उठाइ धनु लीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

gurahi pranāmu manahim mana kīnhā. ati lāghavam' uṭhā'i dhanu līnhā. 5.

He (Lord Ram) mentally offered his obeisance to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) to invoke his blessings¹, and then he lifted the bow so swiftly that everything was finished in an instant, so fast that in one instant the bow was on the ground and in another instant it was in the Lord's hand. (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has bowed to his Guru three times till now, this being the third time. The 'first time' was when the sage had ordered him to get up and go break the bow—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 254; the 'second time' was when Lord Ram actually left his seat and moved towards the platform where the bow was kept—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 255; and now at this is the 'third time' when he pays his respects to his Guru while actually lifting and breaking the bow, or in other words, carrying out the orders of the Guru.

It is said that paying one's respects to elders, such as one's parents and his Guru, has three dimensions—by one's physical body and its actions, by one's words or what one speaks, and the third component is mental which implies that one is completely committed to obey at the mental level.

All these three dimensions are applicable here: (i) In the first instance when Lord Ram has bowed at the feet of his Guru as he got up from his seat on the latter's orders, it

is his obeying the Guru's commands with physical action of getting up instantly without hesitation. (ii) In the second instance when he bowed to the Guru and asked his permission to move towards the bow, it is his obeying the Guru's orders by employing words because he has 'asked' for the Guru's permission and told him that 'it will be done as ordered'. (iii) And finally now, in the third instance, he has bowed to his Guru at the mental level to seek his final blessing before actually carrying out the ordered deed, which in this case was to break the bow.

There is another interesting reason why Lord Ram has bowed before his Guru 'mentally'. For one, the Guru was sitting far away in his seat near king Janak, and it made no sense of going there to touch his feet to seek his blessings and permission once again when that has already been granted.

Secondly, at that time Lord Ram was facing the bow and had his back to the place where the Guru was seated in the pavilion. Had he physically turned round to, say, wave at the Guru or loudly seek his blessings, it would have been a laughable matter and would have given a wrong signal to all those present that he was dithering, feeling fidgety and uncomfortable, and that he was being showy and boastful. This would unnecessarily stoke the fire of jealousy and envy in the heart of the failed kings. Lord Ram did not want to create scene and a mockery of himself.

The third reason is that the mystical powers of holy souls and their blessings and goodwill are invoked silently by means of mental prayer, without any physical sign that one is offering worship and prayer. The worship and prayer is done at the mental level rather than at the physical level, and it is the sincerity and faith with which this is done that is of paramount importance than the show of supplication and devotion.

²This is the same bow which had not moved an inch when all the warriors, individually as well as together, had tried their best to lift it, or at the least move it. The Lord simply plucked it from the ground in a swift move, so quickly that there was no time lapse between the moment when the bow lay on the ground and the moment it was in his hand.]

दमकेउ दामिनि जिमि जब लयऊ । पुनि नभ धनु मंडल सम भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥
लेत चढ़ावत खैंचत गाढ़ें । काहुँ न लखा देख सबु ठाढ़ें ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि छन राम मध्य धनु तोरा । भरे भुवन धुनि घोर कठोरा ॥ ८ ॥

damakē'u dāmini jimi jaba laya'ū. puni nabha dhanu maṇḍala sama bhaya'ū. 6.
lēta caṛhāvata khaiṇcata gāṛhēm. kāhum'na lakhā dēkha sabu ṭhāṛhēm. 7.
tēhi chana rāma madhya dhanu tōrā. bharē bhuvana dhuni ghōra kaṭhōrā. 8.

[These three verses, nos. 6-8, describe the actual breaking of the bow.]

As soon as the Lord lifted it from the ground, it emitted a dazzling spark of brilliant light that resembled the stab of lightening one sees in the rain-bearing dark clouds in the sky. Then when the bow was in the air in the Lord's hand, it bent and assumed a curved form like the curvature of the sky's parasol (as the Lord bent its one end in order to string it). (6)

No one could see him pick the bow from the ground, stringing it, and then pulling it hard (with one outstretched hand holding the bow in front, and the other hand pulling

its string as far back as his ears). All they could see that there was a dazzling light and then Lord Ram was standing with the bent bow in his hands.

[In other words, these three actions—of lifting, stringing and pulling the bow—were done very swiftly, as if done in a second. The blinding spark of light that was produced at the instant the bow had left the ground made all those watching the proceedings blink their eyes, and when they opened it they found that the Lord was standing with the bow already strung and bent sharply because its string was pulled back right upto his ears in a swift movement of his hand.] (7)

Right at that instant, Lord Ram broke the bow in the middle. It snapped with a thunderous roar that reverberated and echoed throughout the ‘Bhuvans’ (or the entire world)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/92, stanza no. 5 also.

Remember that it was not an ordinary bow made by any human craftsman. It was crafted by Vishwakarma, the Smith of the gods, and was intended to be used by Lord Shiva to kill demons. So naturally this bow had celestial dimensions.

The bow gave out a sharp spark of blinding light like the one that is seen in the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky, or that is witnessed when a high-voltage live electric wire is snapped. Then the upper end of the bow was pulled in to bend it sufficiently in order to put the string on it. After that, without losing any time, the Lord pulled the string hard, right upto his ears, thereby bending the bow to an angle which made it snap in the middle.]

छं०. भरे भुवन घोर कठोर रव रबि बाजि तजि मारगु चले । १ ॥
चिक्करहिं दिग्गज डोल महि अहि कोल कूरुम कलमले ॥ २ ॥
सुर असुर मुनि कर कान दीन्हें सकल बिकल बिचारहीं । ३ ॥
कोदंड खंडेउ राम तुलसी जयति बचन उचारहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bharē bhuvana ghōra kaṭhōra rava rabi bāji taji māragu calē. 1.
cikkarahīm diggaja ḍōla mahi ahi kōla kūruma kalamalē. 2.
sura asura muni kara kāna dīnhēm sakala bikala bicārahīm. 3.
kōdaṇḍa khaṇḍē'u rāma tulasī jayati bacana ucārahīm. 4.

#All the ‘Bhuvans’¹ were filled with the deafening sound of the bow breaking into two. The horses of the chariot of the Sun God got so scared that they ran hither and thither away from their designated path across the sky. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Diggajs gave out a shrill cry. The earth shook and trembled. The Serpent, the Tortoise and the Boar squirmed and shifted in their respective places². (Chanda line no. 2)

The gods (in the heaven), the demons (in the nether world), and the sages and hermits (on the earth) closed their ears with their hands (when they heard the deafening roar of the bow as it broke). All of them became restless and guessed that [3] Lord Ram

has finally broken the formidable bow (because no other event would produce this sort of sound)³.

Tulsidas (the author of this epic book, the Ram Charit Manas) praises this moment and honours his Lord, Sri Ram, hailing his victory and proclaiming his glory in the world.⁴ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—# Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 1/92, stanza no. 5.

¹There are fourteen 'Bhuvans' or parts of this universe. They are the following—(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha Loka:—(i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Paataal. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

These fourteen Bhuvans incorporate the entire living creation within its meaning. Hence, the sound of the bow breaking spread throughout this creation.

²Now, broadly speaking, the Bhuvans can be divided into three areas—the heaven consisting of the sky, the terrestrial part made up of the earth, and the nether world which lies underneath the earth. Each of these parts is represented here by one entity—viz. the heaven is represented by the Sun God's horses that move across the sky, creating day and night, the Diggajs represent the earth because they hold the latter from its eight corners, and the lower world is represented by the Serpent, the Tortoise and the Boar who lie below the Diggajs and hold the earth from below.

³The news of the bow-breaking ceremony had spread far and wide. The 'gods' represent the heaven, the sages represent the earth, and the demons represent the nether world.

⁴Chanda line nos. 3-4 can be interpreted in another way as follows—"Tulsidas says that the gods, the sages and the demons closed their ears with their hands as the thunderous sound of the bow breaking reached them. They realized that this sound means that the bow was indeed broken by Lord Ram (as all of them had heard that the bow-breaking ceremony was in progress). So they hailed this development and sang the glories of the Lord."

Now, a pertinent question would arise—it is alright to think of the gods and the sages lauding Lord Ram's breaking of the bow, but why did the demons celebrated when they knew that Lord Vishnu has come down to earth as Lord Ram to kill them? Well, the answer is simple: not all the demons were bad, and not all of them were killed by the Lord. This will be evident later on in the story when we read that at the end of the war at Lanka, Vibhishan, the younger brother of the demon king Ravana, was anointed as the ruler of Lanka along with the demons who survived the war, and this included Ravana's wife Mandodari. In other words, only the nasty demons were eliminated, and not those who did not torment others inspite of them having the physical body of a demon.]

सो०. संकर चापु जहाजु सागरु रघुबर बाहुबलु।

बूड़ सो सकल समाजु चढ़ा जो प्रथमहिं मोह बस ॥ २६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

saṅkara cāpu jahāju sāgaru raghubara bāhubalu.
būṛa sō sakala samāju carḥā jō prathamahirṁ mōha basa. 261.

The bow of Lord Shiva was like a huge ship, and the strength of Lord Ram's arms was like the vast and fathomless ocean (whose depth and enormity could not be measured). Those deluded and ignorant people who had tried to cross this ocean with the help of this symbolic ship sank in this ocean along with the ship itself. (Sortha/Doha no. 261)

[Note—In this Sortha/Doha, the breaking of the bow by Lord Ram is likened to the sinking of the ship in the ocean. Those who had laughed at the thought (i.e. had thought it impossible) that the Lord would be able to break it simply because none of the mightiest warriors of the earth, either individually or together, had been able to move the bow as much as an inch, had to hide their faces and bury themselves in a heap of shame.

Since the deluded people, including the haughty kings, in their utter ignorance had relied on the hardness of the bow and its determination not to move, no matter what happens, to doubt at the possibility of Lord Ram ever breaking it, a possibility they thought was never going to materialise, all their misconceptions about the true nature of Lord Ram collapsed like a pack of cards and sank in a pit of shame, disgrace, embarrassment and humiliation just like a group of arrogant and over-confident passengers, who are determined to conquer the vastness and ferocity of the ocean, boarding a big ship that is renowned for its robust built and unsinkability, jeering and teasing the huge waves of the mighty ocean to challenge the latter, suddenly drowning in its deep waters when the ship capsizes all of a sudden without any warning.

Yes, this is what exactly happened. The bow broke 'without a warning'; it was a very sudden and an unexpected development—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and their following Chanda that precede this Sortha no. 261.

In other words, those who did not know the reality of Lord Ram that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, and in their ignorance they thought him to be an ordinary human prince, just could not imagine in their wildest of dreams that the bow which all of them could not move even a fraction of an inch could ever be lifted, strung and broken so easily by Lord Ram. They had attempted to measure the strength of the Lord's arms by weighing it against the determination of the bow not to break at any cost; they had tried to compare the Lord's endless divine abilities and measureless strength with their own limited human abilities and strength. They had virtually challenged the ability of the Lord to break the bow and prove himself as the strongest warrior in the world. All such people had to bite the dust.

When Lord Ram was proceeding towards the bow, these people, who were under the spell of delusions and were driven by ignorance, had thought that a big joke is being played upon them. They wondered how a young prince, who has a delicate body as compared to the muscular and well-built bodies of veteran kings, and who is still very young and lacks experience which these war-hardened veterans possessed, can ever lift the heavy bow, leave aside stringing and breaking it, when all the warrior kings had failed to move it an inch?

The common people harboured grave doubts about the possibility of Lord Ram lifting the bow, while the kings who had actually tried to lift the bow thought it was impossible because they had actually touched it, examined its strength and had tried their best but failed. These kings were so sure and confident of themselves, of their own strength and powers that they thought that if they can't do it, nobody on earth would be able to do it. They must have sneered, smirked and jeered at Lord Ram when he got up from his seat, proceeded towards the bow, and stood before it.

Hence, when the bow actually snapped, the ego, haughtiness and arrogance of these kings also snapped with it. In other words, both the bow as well as the false sense of pride of the haughty kings broke simultaneously.]

चौ०. प्रभु दोउ चापखंड महि डारे । देखि लोग सब भए सुखारे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu dō'u cāpakhaṇḍa mahi ḍārē. dēkhi lōga saba bha'ē sukhārē. 1.

The Lord dropped the two pieces of the broken bow on the ground. Everyone became happy and joyous when they saw this. (1)

[Note—Earlier it has been already said that “the Lord broke the bow from the middle”—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Sortha no. 261 above. In other words, the bow broke into ‘two pieces’ of roughly the same size which the Lord then dropped on the ground.

This was the moment the people were waiting for. So, as soon as the Lord dropped the broken bow pieces on the ground, the people became jubilant.

Remember: These people who became happy should not be confused with those who are referred to above in Sortha no. 261. Those people were the ones who harboured inimical thoughts and had negative attitude, and they obviously were the defeated kings. These kings had refused to listen to the sane advice of their brethrens but decided to go and break the bow so that they can marry Sita inspite of being advised that she was Jagdamba (the mother of the world, the Mother Goddess) and Lord Ram was the personified form of the Supreme Father of the world—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246.

The people who felt happy and joyful by the breaking of the bow were the citizens of Janakpur¹, the family members of Sita², and of course the ‘good kings’³ who had decided to desist from attempting to lift the bow as they were wise enough to perceive the reality of Lord Ram and Sita.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—¹(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255; ²(iii) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257; and ³(iv) Doha no. 245 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.]

कौसिकरूप पयोनिधि पावन । प्रेम बारि अवगाहु सुहावन ॥ २ ॥

रामरूप राकेसु निहारी । बढत बीचि पुलकावलि भारी ॥ ३ ॥

kausikarūpa payōnidhi pāvana. prēma bāri avagāhu suhāvana. 2.
rāmarūpa rākēsu nihārī. baṛhata bīci pulakāvali bhārī. 3.

Sage Vishwamitra became exhilarated, and his body thrilled beyond description. His physical form was metaphorically like a huge ocean of nectar (or sweet water) in which

huge waves of happiness and exhilaration began to heave and rise up when the sage saw the beauteous form of Lord Ram that resembled a full moon.

[Here, the metaphor of the waves of the ocean rising when the full moon shines in the night sky is cited to give an idea of the happiness and joy that the sage felt. His excitement and jubilation is like the rising waves in the ocean which is compared to the sage's body. Just like an ocean that is filled with sweet water instead of the usual salty water, the sage's inner being was filled with fatherly love and affection for Lord Ram. When he saw the Lord standing triumphantly near the broken bow, he could no more suppress his joy and excitement just like the ocean cannot suppress its waves that rise up and go higher up as if they want to reach out and touch the full moon.] (2-3)

[Note—In other words, when the sage saw Lord Ram standing victorious by the side of the broken bow, his heart pumped with joy and his body could not hide its excitement.

Remember: It was a moment of great happiness for sage Vishwamitra as he had fulfilled his role and obligation as a 'foster-father of Lord Ram' that the Lord's real father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, had assigned upon him at the time of sending the two brothers with the sage to protect his fire sacrifice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 10.

What would any father want more than his son achieving a magnificent victory that would proclaim him at once as the greatest warrior on earth, an achievement that would at once establish his fame and name in the whole world because this victory was no mean achievement as it involved the breaking of a formidable bow that none of the famous and the mightiest kings of the time could break, an event that was witnessed by all the kings and princes of the world in a jam-packed assembly, and which was rewarded with marriage with a girl of one of the greatest dynasty of kings that ruled the earth at that time, a girl whose beauty and elegance was unmatched anywhere.

Indeed sage Vishwamitra felt happy that he was able to reward Lord Ram and Laxman with this happy moment for their helping him to complete his fire sacrifice, and freeing him from the terror of the demons, who had been constantly tormenting him for long, by killing all of them.]

बाजे नभ गहगहे निसाना । देवबधू नाचहिं करि गाना ॥ ४ ॥

ब्रह्मादिक सुर सिद्ध मुनीसा । प्रभुहि प्रसंसहिं देहिं असीसा ॥ ५ ॥

बरिसहिं सुमन रंग बहु माला । गावहिं किंनर गीत रसाला ॥ ६ ॥

bājē nabha gahagahē nisānā. dēvabadhū nācahiṁ kari gānā. 4.

brahmādika sura sid'dha munīsā. prabhuhi prasansahiṁ dēhiṁ asīsā. 5.

barisahiṁ sumana raṅga bahu mālā. gāvahiṁ kinnara gīta rasālā. 6.

[As soon as the formidable 'bow' broke into two, there was a spontaneous outburst of celebrations that erupted instantaneously everywhere—in the heavens as well as on the earth. There was a thunderous applause of congratulation, thanksgiving and adulation that was accompanied by the clamour of playing of variety of musical instruments, the exuberance of merriment and dancing and singing in joyance abundance, and a general atmosphere of great exhilaration and ecstasy that seemed to surpass anything ever witnessed anywhere in the world aforesaid and not to be witnessed aftertime.

Thereat, Janak's royal priest ordered Sita to proceed to Lord Ram and put the 'victory garland' around the Lord's neck to declare him victorious and seal the bond of marriage. Thence, Sita was escorted to the spot where Lord Ram stood near the bow. Sita was so much seized with ecstasy and dumbfounded with joy that seemeth to burst through her heart and swamp her entire being that when the time came to actually raise her hands and garland the victor, her beloved Lord Ram, and then bow down to touch his feet as a gesture of paying her respect, she was absolutely stunned and stone-immobile as a statue, her mind failing to register any thoughts and the body responded to no impulses though they were thrilled beyond imagination and measure.

When the defeated kings and princes saw Sita demur from garlanding Lord Ram and bowing to pay her respects to him, these pervert-minded and jealous fellows misinterpreted it as Sita's unwillingness to accept the Lord. Earlier we have read in Baal Kand, Doha no. 248 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that when Sita came to the arena at the beginning of the bow ceremony, she had causally glanced in all the direction to see the assembly, obviously taking stock of the situation and getting a general bird's eye view of the suitors who had assembled there to vie for her. While doing this her eyes fell on each of the eager faces of the competing kings and princes who were all staring at her. Now, when Sita's eyes scanned the assembly and bounced from fact to face, each of these greedy and lustful fellows thought that Sita had stopped her glance at him for a trifle longer moment, implying that she seemeth to like him! The fact was that Sita was searching for Lord Ram, and as soon as she saw him she stopped moving her eyes any further, casting them down out of modesty.

Therefore, when these envious and jealous kings of perverted mind saw Sita's stupefied reaction when asked to garland Lord Ram and touch his feet, they rose up in revolt in what seemeth to be their apparent attempt to express sympathy for her cause and solidarity with her in her reluctance to declare Lord Ram the victor by the means of putting the 'victory garland' around the Lord's neck and accepting him as her husband by bowing and touching his feet, expecting that by this dare-devilry and chivalrous action of theirs they would be able to gain her attention and admiration, and, in their vilest of hopes, of her hand as well in marriage.

These events that haply happened in quick succession are described below, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 266.]

Kettle-drums began to be sounded (played) in the sky (heaven) with a loud noise. The celestial nymphs and dancers of the gods (known as Apsaras) broke out in a spontaneous dance that was accompanied by singing of melodious songs. (4)

Brahma (the creator) and other gods, the Siddhas (mystics) and the Munis (sages) praised the Lord and blessed him profusely. (5)

They rained (showered) flowers of a variety of colours as well as garlands upon the Lord. The Kinnars (heavenly male dancers and singers) sang many melodious songs. (6)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 9 also.

Whereas the gods, the Kinnars and the Apsaras represented the inhabitants of the heaven, the sages and mystics represented those of the earth.

A similar idea of an all-round celebration and blessing by the sages and mystics appears in Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327 in the context of

the marriage of Lord Ram along with his other three brothers. It is said here that “there was immense exultation in the city as well as in the sky (heaven); everyone, the sages, the saints, the mystics and the senior gods, blessed the four couples with a long and happy life; and musical instrument known as Dundubhi (a kettle-drum) was played with great enthusiasm”.

Celebrations were accompanied by dancing, singing and playing of musical instruments both in the city as well as in the heaven—refer also to Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265. The verses that follow below compliment the description of the celebrations that have started in the current verses.]

रही भुवन भरि जय जय बानी । धनुषभंग धुनि जात न जानी ॥ ७ ॥

rahī bhuvana bhari jaya jaya bānī. dhanuṣabhaṅga dhuni jāta na jānī. 7.

The entire world was filled with the sound of blessings and felicitations that were showered upon Lord Ram; all the Bhuvans reverberated with the sound of praise and hailing of the Lord's glorious achievement. The cacophony created by the sound of these exultations, cheers, hailings, praises and blessings that erupted everywhere, in all the corners of the world, was so intense and deafening that it literally drowned (i.e. was louder than) the still-lingering echo of the thunder that was initially created when the bow broke an instant ago.

[In other words, no sooner had the bow broken than the world erupted in a tumult of joy and cheering. The first wave of the thunderous sound that was produced at the instant the bow broke was heard by everyone, and all who heard it had to involuntarily close his or her ears to avoid becoming deaf. But almost simultaneously there was an eruption of joy and exultation, the sound of which was so immense that it surpassed the intensity of the sound of the bow's breaking.

The cacophonous sound of celebrations suppressed the secondary sound of the breaking of the bow that still lingered on in the form of an echo that continued to reverberate for some more time before it subsided completely.] (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

मुदित कहहिं जहँ तहँ नर नारी । भंजेउ राम संभुधनु भारी ॥ ८ ॥

mudita kahahīṁ jaham̐ taham̐ nara nārī. bhañjē'u rāma sambhudhanu bhārī. 8.

Exhilarated men and women are exulting with joy, and they tell each other excitedly here and there that Lord Ram has broken the heavy bow of Lord Shiva. (8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

दे०। बंदी मागध सूतगन बिरुद बदहिं मतिधीर ।

करहिं निछावरि लोग सब हय गय धन मनि चीर ॥ २६२ ॥

dōhā.

bandī māgadha sūtagana biruda badahim matidhīra.
karahim nichāvari lōga saba haya gaya dhana mani cīra. 262.

While the talented bards, minstrels, poets and singers sang praises of the Lord and the legend of his glories, other people gave away horses, elephants, wealth and clothes as gifts to celebrate the occasion and express their joy. (Doha no. 262)

[Note—The royal bards were employed by the king to sing laudatory songs on happy occasions. Refer other instances in Ram Charit Manas such as when Lord Ram and his other three brothers were born (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 194), and when Sita has put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 among other instances).

These singers assemble during celebrations such as marriage or the birth of a child in the household to sing songs, and in return they are gifted valuables such as gems, money, food and clothes. Gifting of elephants and horses may be a figure of speech, a hyperbole to indicate the enormity of the gifts that were given. But at the same time it must also be remembered that Janakpur was a prosperous kingdom, and there is no doubt that there were rich merchants and other wealthy citizens who could afford to keep a personal collection of large number of horses and elephants as symbols of their status in the society. So it was not difficult for them to give some of these animals as gifts to others to show their happiness.

The general scene is of euphoria and celebrations. It was a momentous event, and the whole city erupted in a spontaneous wave of happiness and joy.]

चौ०. झाँझि मृदंग संख सहनाई । भेरि ढोल दुंदुभी सुहाई ॥ १ ॥
बाजहिं बहु बाजने सुहाए । जहँ तहँ जुबतिन्ह मंगल गाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jhām̐jhi mṛdaṅga saṅkha sahanā'ī. bhēri ḍhōla dundubhī suhā'ī. 1.
bājahim̐ bahu bājanē suhā'ē. jaham̐ taham̐ jubatinha maṅgala gā'ē. 2.

A cacophony of loud sound was produced by an assortment of musical instruments playing simultaneously. They included crashing of cymbals, playing of timbrels or tambourines, blowing of conches and clarionets, beating of drums and kettle-drums in a pleasant and melodious form¹.

Women folk sang auspicious songs befitting the occasion everywhere, wherever they were present on that moment (as soon as this auspicious news reached their ears)². (1-2)

[Note—¹The moment is for a grand celebration. Music played on musical instruments of various kinds to the accompaniment of melodious songs is part of such celebrations. These instruments were in vogue in those days. The kettle-drum is the standard musical instrument that is played by the gods in the sky (heaven). There are many references to this instrument played by the gods to celebrate special occasions. Some of these

occasions are the following:--(i) Birth of Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 191); (ii) Lord Ram breaking the bow (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262); (iii) Celebration of Lord Ram's victory over the demon king Ravana at the end of the epic war of Lanka (refer: Lanka Kand, line no. 3 of Chanda no. 1 that precede Doha no. 103, and line no. 1 of Doha no. 109).

The conch is blown prior to making of an important announcement, such as before the commencement of battle or after some great victory. It is also blown at the start and the end of an auspicious, religious ceremony, when one proceeds for a journey, and all such occasion that herald a change. For instance, when the marriage party of Lord Ram and his brothers left the kingdom of Janakpur for their own kingdom of Ayodhya, all these musical instruments mentioned here, including the conch, were played enthusiastically—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344.

Geetawali of Tulsidas also captures this celebratory moment in its Baal Kand, verse no. 94.

²It is not practical that each and every woman of Janakpur was present in the arena where the bow was broken. Though a large number of them had come, but an equally large number could not be accommodated or had preferred to remain at home because they knew there won't be sufficient space in the arena, no matter how vast it might have been, to accommodate each single citizen of the city. All the citizens had been eagerly waiting for the good news that Lord Ram has finally broken the bow. And when this news spread like wild-fire as soon as the bow broke, spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the city. The women folk sprang up to dance and sing wherever they were present at that instant. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 below.]

सखिन्ह सहित हरषी अति रानी । सूखत धान परा जनु पानी ॥ ३ ॥
जनक लहेउ सुखु सोचु बिहाई । पैरत थकें थाह जनु पाई ॥ ४ ॥

sakhinha sahita haraṣī ati rānī. sūkhata dhāna parā janu pānī. 3.
janaka lahē'u sukhu sōcu bihāī. pairata thakēn thāha janu pāī. 4.

[These two verses, nos. 3 and 4, describe the happiness of Sita's parents, the queen mother (Sunayana) and king Janak.]

The queen, along with her companions, was as happy and contented as a farmer is when it begins to rain just at the time when the horrible spectre of a drought was looming on the horizon¹. (3)

Janak's worries and consternations faded away just like the case of man who has become tired of swimming in deep water (of an ocean) and is about to give up when he suddenly finds a some solid land (or any float for that matter) that renews his hope and saves him from sure drowning². (4)

[Note—¹The queen was very perplexed as to what would happen if Lord Ram does not or is unable to break the bow. She had confided with her close companion about her worries. This friend had then assured the queen not to be distressed and feel contrite as Lord Ram was sure to break the bow and marry Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

But though the queen found some solace by this assurance, she was still skeptical as no one can predict with absolute certainty what is in store in the future. Her condition is

compared to a farmer who is on the edge and in great mental and emotional torment as he fears about the possibility of a severe drought which will ruin his harvest. He would pray to gods and discuss with everyone he meets to find some emotional support, but his mind is submerged in fear and worries. Then the unexpected miracle happens—when everything seems lost, when he has no more hopes of saving his harvest and has resigned himself to his fate, preparing to face the worst consequences that stare on his face, dark clouds portending the coming of rain suddenly, unexpectedly, appear on the horizon, and then soon it begins to rain heavily. Obviously, his joy will know no bounds.

In this metaphor, when all the kings had failed to move the bow, for the queen it was like the looming drought that the farmer faces because Sita would have to remain unmarried for the rest of her life. No mother would ever want this to happen. It was tantamount to the farmer coming to utter ruin when his hope of a good harvest is destroyed without rainfall.

When all seemed lost, Lord Ram rose from his seat. It was like the unexpected appearance of the dark rain-bearing clouds in the horizon. The metaphor is exceptionally apt because Lord Ram had a dark complexion and was provider of solace and succour to all his devotees much like the rain-bearing clouds that provide the life-giving rain that quenches the thirst of the earth, helps produce crops, and provides happiness to all living beings. Hope rose as soon as the queen saw the Lord get up from his seat to proceed towards the bow—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

And when the Lord finally broke the bow, it was like the rain actually falling down on the parched field of the farmer, saving his crop and harvest. It is indeed a time to celebrate.

²Refer also to: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 7; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.

The same logic applies to Sita's father, king Janak. He too had lost all hopes of ever being able to marry Sita. He was a renowned king and could not act foolishly by breaking his vows and becoming a butt of laughter and scorn in the world. After all, he had to maintain his dignity and respect of his dynasty that had always stood by its words.

The mental and emotional condition of Janak is compared with a man about to get drowned when he suddenly sees a buoy floating towards him out of nowhere to save his life.

In this instance, when Janak had declared that Sita would have to remain unmarried because no one has been able to break the bow, he had virtually surrendered himself to his fate like a man who has lost all strength to swim any more and has resigned to his fate that he would be drowned. Then suddenly, unexpectedly and without his asking anybody, sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow to “remove the worries of Janak” (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254. This was like the case of tired swimmer who was about to give up and prepare himself to face the worst scenario of getting drowned when he suddenly feels some solid land below him. It is also like the case of a providential buoy that comes floating on its own volition to the drowning man to save him.

One really marvels at the skill of Tulsidas, the author of this great epic Ram Charit Manas, in employing excellent metaphors and wonderfully apt similes to highlight the subtle nuances of any development.]

श्रीहत भए भूप धनु टूटे । जैसैं दिवस दीप छबि छूटे ॥ ५ ॥

śrīhata bha'e bhūpa dhanu tūṭē. jaisēm divasa dīpa chabi chūṭē. 5.

[This verse describes the condition of the kings who had failed to move the bow.]

The competing kings (who had failed to move and break the bow) lost all their glories, their countenances losing their shine to become faded just like the earthen lamps losing the illumination of their lights and fading away in importance to become irrelevant as soon as the sun rises and the day dawns. (5)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 6 also.

When it is dark in the night, even a single lamp appears to shine brilliantly, its light illuminating its surroundings. Against the background of the darkness, the lighted lamp can be seen from a distant. But when the sun rises up in the sky, all these lamps become inconsequential, and even if they are lighted they do not attract attention. Against the brilliant illumination of the day and the dazzling light of the sun, the feeble light emanating from the wick of the lamp is as good as not being there at all. Millions of lighted lamps fade away in the presence of a single sun.

Here, all the thousands of kings are likened to the lamps in this verse. Their faces glowing with pride and self-importance are like the light around the wick of these lamps, and Lord Ram is compared to the single sun in the sky during the daytime. All the kings sulked and lost the sheen on their faces as soon as the bow broke because a single prince, Lord Ram, had put all of them to shame. It is exactly like the case of thousands of lighted lamps suddenly fading away when the sun rises in the sky.]

सीय सुखहि बरनिअ केहि भाँती । जनु चातकी पाइ जलु स्वाती ॥ ६ ॥

siya sukhahi barani'a kēhi bhāmṭī. janu cātakī pā'i jalu svātī. 6.

[This verse describes the condition of Sita and her extreme sense of fulfillment.]

How can sufficiently describe the joy and happiness that Sita felt (when Lord Ram broke the bow). Her condition was like a female Chatak bird who gets a drop of dew that falls during the Swati constellation. (6)

[Note—The Chatak bird is famous for its determination to drink only that drop of dew or rain that falls during a special constellation of stars known as “Swati”. If it does not get this drop of water, it would prefer to die than to save its life by drinking from any other source of water.

Sita had decided that if she has to marry then she would marry Lord Ram and no one else. She would prefer to remain unmarried for life if she was denied marriage with Lord Ram. That is why she felt happy in her heart when none of the kings could move the bow and Laxman has stood up to challenge her father that if Lord Ram gives him permission he will break the bow as if it was a child's play. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254 above.

So, her dreams were realized when the Lord broke the bow. She felt a new life was given to her just like a Chatak bird who is about to die due to thirst is granted a drop of dew or rain-water during the Swati constellation.

The immense sense of contentedness and fulfillment of Sita is indescribable in words—refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 242.]

रामहि लखनु बिलोकत कैसें । ससिहि चकोर किसोरकु जैसें ॥ ७ ॥

rāmahi lakhanu bilōkata kaisēm. sasihi cakōra kisōraku jaisēm. 7.

[This verse describes the happiness of Laxman, Lord Ram's younger dear brother and constant companion.]

Laxman watched Lord Ram, happily and with great affection, in a way a young Chakor bird looks at the full moon, enchanted and exhilarated in its heart. (7)

[Note—The Chakor bird is said to be so enamoured of the moon that it fixes its gaze on the latter as soon as it rises in the east, follows the path of the moon across the sky and till it sets in the west. Likewise, Laxman watched his dear and loving brother Lord Ram closely: from the time he rose from his seat, walked upto the bow, and finally broke the bow and stood beside the broken pieces lying on the ground.

Laxman was not only a dear brother of Lord Ram but also his close friend and constant companion with whom the Lord shared all his thoughts. Laxman had served the Lord truly like a devoted servant during the 14 years of forest exile, carrying out all his orders and making the Lord's stay in the forest as comfortable as possible. Laxman had remained vigilant and gave protection to Lord Ram and Sita throughout their forest sojourn, even going without sleep for this long period so that he can keep watch while the Lord and Sita rested. If there was any remote hint of danger or harm to Lord Ram, it was Laxman who stepped forward to give protection. There are countless instances to support these observations in Ram Charit Manas. Some of them are the following—

(a) Baal Kand: (i) Doha no. 197; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 198; (iii) from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 238; (v) Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

(b) Ayodhya Kand: (i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72. (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 141; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142; (v) Doha no. 230 along with its Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

(c) Aranya Kand: (i) Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.

(d) Kishikindha Kand: Doha no. 18 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

(e) Sundar Kand: Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 58.

(f) Lanka Kand: Sortha no. 61 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-18.

Hence, it was natural for Laxman feel jubilant when his beloved Lord and dear brother obtained victory by breaking the bow.

This happiness of Laxman also removes any doubt about his intentions when he had angrily said that if Lord Ram gives his permission then he would break the bow like it was some soft lotus flower. Laxman did not mean to either insult Lord Ram or marry Sita by breaking the bow. What he intended was to seek retribution and save the glory of Lord Ram because king Janak had declared in the Lord's presence that "the world was empty of warriors because no one could break the bow". How dare Janak make this statement in the presence of Lord Ram when the latter was not even invited to break the bow, or at least asked if he would like to try his hand at the bow. This infuriated Laxman as he could not tolerate such slight on his Lord.]

सतानंद तब आयसु दीन्हा । सीताँ गमनु राम पहिं कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

satānanda taba āyasu dīnhā. sītām' gamanu rāma pahim kīnhā. 8.

Then, on the orders of Satanand (the royal priest of king Janak), Sita proceeded towards Lord Ram (to put the victory garland on him). (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/96, stanza no. 2 also.

It was a standard practice that before taking any action, a permission was needed from the family's Guru. If that family happened to be the ruling family, then its Guru played the role of a royal priest as well.

In the case of king Janak, this Guru and the royal family's priest was Satanand, while in the case of king Dasrath of Ayodhya the royal priest was sage Vasistha.

For Lord Ram and Laxman, this role of a Guru was assumed by sage Vishwamitra as he had taught them the secrets of the art of warfare and use of mystical weapons, and was their guardian in the forest as well as in Janakpur.

There is an interesting point to note here. When Sita was summoned to come to the arena, king Janak had ordered that she be brought there, and not Satanand. But here it is Satanand who gives the orders to Sita to go and put the garland on Lord Ram. This difference is because Janak was Sita's father, and a father can call his son or daughter any time he wants. No permission is needed by any father from anyone for this. But putting the victory garland on Lord Ram was a formal occasion as it would seal their marriage in an open court, which was a very important event. The whole of the marriage ceremony and its accompanying rituals needed the guidance and participation of the family's Guru, and putting the victory garland on the would-be-groom was the first step in this process. Hence, the Guru had to be involved.

We have already read about a similar thing earlier in the case of Lord Ram being summoned by his father to pay his obeisance to sage Vishwamitra when the latter had arrived in Ayodhya. But when the time came for sending the two brothers to the forest with the sage, their Guru sage Vasistha had to intervene. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 207, and Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 208.

Now, when Lord Ram had broken the bow and claimed undisputed victory, Sita was automatically deemed to have become his bride according to the vows of king Janak (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 250). But formalities had to be kept, and so Sita was needed to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram to officially and formally acknowledge his victory and seal the bond that made them husband and wife in an open court.

It is merely said in this verse that "Satanand has given his orders", but it has not been clarified what orders he gave. The answer lies in common sense that it was for Sita to go and put the victory garland on the victor, who in this case was Lord Ram.

Though her marriage with Lord Ram had been decided at the instant the bow was broken, but it was necessary for her to walk upto the Lord and voluntarily put the garland around his neck to show that she had accepted this alliance and was ready to become the Lord's wife.

Though seemingly superficial and merely a formality, this ritual of 'putting the garland on the victor' was necessary to make sure that the bride-to-be has no objection to accept the victor as her groom. In case she did not approve of him, she had one last chance to show her dislike and disapproval by refusing to garland him. Then her parents and the assembly would be given a hint that the girl is not ready to accept the competition's victor as her groom, and then some other methods could be devised. This was an extremely crucial step in the entire process because the girl—whose whole future was tied to such marriage ceremonies as the one employed by Janak to marry his daughter Sita that were in vogue in ancient times—was not consulted by her parents before they decided on any method to find a suitable groom for her. The poor girl was left at the mercy of her parents in a patriarchal society. Hence, if the girl did not approve of

anyone who was to become her groom, she can publicly show her disapproval by refusing to garland him.

In other words, this ritual of 'garlanding the victor' by the girl was used as a 'safety valve' to avoid future complications.]

दो०. संग सखीं सुंदर चतुर गावहिं मंगलचार ।
गवनी बाल मराल गति सुषमा अंग अपार ॥ २६३ ॥

dōhā.

saṅga sakhīṁ sundara catura gāvahiṁ maṅgalacāra.
gavanī bāla marāla gati suṣamā aṅga apāra. 263.

Accompanied by her friends who were charming and clever, and who were singing auspicious songs suitable for the occasion, she (Sita) walked elegantly (towards Lord Ram with the garland in her hand) like a young Swan (a cygnet). Her countenance and form were exceptionally charming and beautiful to behold. (Doha no. 263)

[Note—Sita was in full bridal gear. She was a princess, and therefore all measures must have been taken to adorn her with the best of ornaments and clothes; no effort was left to decorate her. The girls who accompanied her must have been selected carefully to match her elegance and glamour as they were the center-piece of the entire ceremony; all eyes would be focused on them. The best of beautiful girls of the kingdom must have been selected to accompany Sita.

Besides the criterion of beauty and charm, their level of wisdom, common sense and wit was also taken into consideration so that they could deftly handle any sticky situation that may arise which needed instant decision. Sita would be nervous and had to maintain her dignity, she would be required to conform to traditions by keeping her eyes and head low. Hence, those who accompanied her needed to be careful and witty. Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 246 which has an identical idea.

Another quality that was required of the bride's companions was their ability to sing auspicious songs of the marriage ceremony. This practice is still in vogue in India whereby the ladies accompanying the bride sing songs throughout the marriage rituals. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 311 which reiterates this view.]

चौ०. सखिन्ह मध्य सिय सोहति कैसें । छबिगन मध्य महाछबि जैसें ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sakhinha madhya siya sōhati kaisēm. chabigana madhya mahāchabi jaisēm. 1.

Sita looked so fabulous and extremely beautiful in the middle of her friends that this scene reminded one of a wonderful picture which was very enchanting and attractive in a general way, but its central figure was so remarkably outstanding that it stood out from the rest of its surroundings and caught one's eyes instantly. (1)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 230. The occasion was Sita's arrival in the garden and Lord Ram seeing her for the first time. Her beauty and charm had held the Lord spell-bound.]

कर सरोज जयमाल सुहाई । बिस्व बिजय सोभा जेहिं छाई ॥ २ ॥

kara sarōja jayamāla suhā'ī. bisva bijaya sōbhā jēhim chā'ī. 2.

She held a wonderful “victory garland” (jayamāla) in hands¹.

This garland personified (symbolized; represented) victory over the whole world; it appeared that the glory and fame of attaining undisputed triumph over the whole of the world were condensed and packed into the form of this ‘victory garland’². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/96, stanza no. 1 also wherein it is said that it looked as if this garland was made by Kamdeo-cupid, the patron god of the virtues of beauty, comeliness and magnificence, himself.

(ii) ‘Janki Mangal’, verse no. 107.

²This is because only a person who could break the formidable bow of Lord Shiva, a bow that Shiva had used to conquer the three legendary cities of the demon Tripura that was a metaphoric victory over all the three worlds, i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world, would become eligible to wear this ‘victory garland’. This garland stood as a symbol of victory over all the three levels of the universe as said above. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 250.]

तन सकोचु मन परम उछाहू । गूढ़ प्रेमु लखि परइ न काहू ॥ ३ ॥

tana sakōcu mana parama uchāhū. gūṛha prēmu lakhi para'i na kāhū. 3.

While Sita's body showed all signs of modesty and restrained behaviour (as she walked slowly to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck), her heart on the other hand was jumping with joy, it was exhilarant. No one could externally perceive the enormous amount of hidden joy and happiness that Sita felt inside her heart. (3)

[Note—After all, this was the moment she was waiting for. Externally she had to maintain her calm and walk in a dignified manner as she was conscious of the fact that thousands of eyes are riveted on her. But her inner being was bubbling with joy and happiness. These moments were the best moments of her life.

A person's eyes do not have the penetrating ability to see what goes inside the other person's heart; only the external behaviour is seen. Hence, all those who were watching Sita had no inkling of the immensity of joy that filled her heart. The onlookers thought that the victory of Lord Ram had no special effect on Sita; they did not know how much she was affected.

This illusion of disinterest and nonchalance that was created by Sita's external calmness led some of the frustrated kings to make a wrong deduction that she was not happy with this alliance but was reluctant to speak because of fear of her father and rebuke by the society. We shall read below that when Sita was reluctant to touch Lord Ram's feet because she feared that she would also meet the same fate as Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who was liberated from her gross body as a stone to come alive in a divine body that she originally had (refer: Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210 and its

preceding Chaupai line no. 12—to Chanda line nos. 1, 14-16 that precede Doha no. 211), the defeated kings thought that she does not like to be married to Lord Ram, and so they stood up in revolt and created a ruckus, declaring their intention to prevent her marriage with the Lord—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 266.

To give due credit to Sita it must be pointed out that she had maintained her poise throughout this ordeal—even when her future was hanging in the balance, she had shown minimal external signs of weakness and worry. Refer: from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.]

जाइ समीप राम छबि देखी । रहि जनु कुअँरि चित्र अवरैखी ॥ ४ ॥

jā'i samīpa rāma chabi dēkhī. rahi janu ku'am̐ri citra avarēkhī. 4.

When she reached near Lord Ram and looked at the Lord's astounding beauty from so close a quarter, she was spell-bound by it and stood motionless as if in a daze and stone-cast, resembling a portrait of a beautiful princess. (4)

[Note—Till this time Sita had seen Lord Ram from a distance, whether it was in the garden where she had gone to offer prayers to goddess Parvati and had seen the Lord for the first time, and also when she stood in the arena during the bow-breaking event. Now, when she approached the Lord to put the victory garland on him, she saw him at close quarter, and the Lord's stunning beauty completed dumbing her into immobility.

It was also the first time that Lord Ram was seeing the stupendous charm of Sita from so close. Hence it is practical to expect that both of them were enchanted with each other in equal measure. This fact is endorsed a little later in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line nos. 3-4 of Chanda stanza no. 2 that precede Doha no. 323 which we shall be reading when we come to it during our narration.]

चतुर सखीं लखि कहा बुझाई । पहिरावहु जयमाल सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

सुनत जुगल कर माल उठाई । प्रेम बिबस पहिराइ न जाई ॥ ६ ॥

catura sakhīm lakhi kahā bujhā'ī. pahirāvahu jayamāla suhā'ī. 5.
sunata jugala kara māla uṭhā'ī. prēma bibasa pahirā'i na jā'ī. 6.

The clever friends saw that the opportune moment was there, and they advised Sita to put the beautiful victory garland on Lord Ram¹. (5)

When Sita heard this advice, she raised her two hands with the victory garland, but she was so overwhelmed and numbed with love and affection for the Lord that she could not actually put the garland around his neck². (6)

[Note—¹It has been said in the previous verse no. 4 that Sita was dazed at the sight of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord from up close. She was virtually immobile like an image in a painting. These two verses, nos. 5-6, expand upon it.

When the friends of Sita observed that she is standing motionless and time was passing away, they prodded her to put the garland on the Lord. As has been noted earlier, her companions were selected carefully, and only those who could handle delicate situations were allowed to accompany her. This was one such occasion which needed deft

handling. So, the wise friends muttered into Sita's ears to stop procrastinating and put the garland on Lord Ram; why is she delaying?

The same situation had prevailed earlier in the garden where also Sita had stood motionless on seeing Lord Ram and Laxman for the first time, and there also her friends had to wake her up from her trance-like state—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 232; Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 234.

²Sita woke up to the realities of life and raised her hands that held the garland to put it around Lord Ram's neck. But a storm was still blowing in her heart and mind. She must have been thinking in these lines: "what is the necessity of this formality of putting the garland on the Lord when I have already accepted him as my eternal lord and master?"; Or that "this garland is made up of worldly flowers that would dry up and shrink in due course of time, so why should I use it to express my love for the Lord that is eternal and more beautiful than the flowers of this garland?"; Or that "why should I not embrace the Lord with my outstretched arms and encircle his neck with a natural wreath symbolized by them instead of using an artificial garland to express my love for him?"

In order to put the garland around the Lord's neck and drape it on his broad shoulders and chest, she had to move still closer to him. It was like a dream come true for Sita! For some moments she forgot that she was here to perform some formal task in the full glare of the public. She instead dreamt of embracing her beloved Lord right there. The physical movement of the hands that was required to put the garland around the neck was similar to actually reaching for the Lord with her outstretched hands and then making a circle around his neck with these hands to bring him closer and embracing him. In other words, these thoughts so overwhelmed Sita that she did not realize that her internal emotions are translating into external delay in observing the formality of garlanding the victor.

So we see how these and such other thoughts made Sita hesitate for a fleeting moment before she finally put the garland around the Lord's neck.]

सोहत जनु जुग जलज सनाला । ससिहि सभित देत जयमाला ॥ ७ ॥

sōhata janu juga jalaja sanālā. sasihi sabhīta dēta jayamālā. 7.

The fascinating sight of Sita's two raised hands holding the victory garland in front of the face of Lord Ram resembled the sight of two tender lotus flowers with their stalks attempting hesitatingly to encircle the moon in a gesture that meant that they want to adorn (honour) it with a garland of victory. (7)

[Note—In this wonderful metaphor, Lord Ram's beautiful face is compared to the full moon, while the two raised hands of Sita are likened to the stalks of the lotus flowers. The two fists of Sita that hold the two upper ends of the garland are like the lotus flowers themselves.

This imagery is so remarkable and fascinating. Since the face of the Lord is in the middle of the circle formed by the Sita's raised hands holding the garland, it is likened to viewing the disc of the moon through the circle formed by two lotus flowers touching each other atop their long stalks.

A striking resemblance is found at one other place—when Lord Ram applies vermilion powder on the head of Sita during the wedding rites. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 325. When read together, they appear to be a symphony in verses.

Refer also to the books (i) 'Janki Mangal' of Tulsidas, verse no. 109; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/96, stanza no. 4.]

गावहिं छबि अवलोकि सहेली । सियँ जयमाल राम उर मेली ॥ ८ ॥

gāvahim chabi avalōki sahēlī. siyam̐ jayamāla rāma ura mēlī. 8.

Watching this charming and magnificent scene (as described in earlier verses), the friends of Sita began to sing in merriment. At that moment (or alerted by their singing), Sita finally put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram and draped it on his chest as its adornment (as well as an unequivocal declaration of Lord's victory and an affirmation of her acceptance of the Lord as her dear husband).

{This verse can be read as follows—"When the friends of Sita saw the beautiful sight of Sita standing with the garland in front of Lord Ram, they felt so exhilarated that they began singing songs spontaneously. This alerted Sita, and so she finally put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram so that it draped on the Lord's chest."}

There is yet another way of reading it as follows—"When the friends of Sita saw the wonderful sight that Sita has put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram and it is resting elegantly on the chest of the Lord, they broke out in spontaneous singing of auspicious songs befitting the occasion."} (8)

[Note—Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 10; and verse no. 1/93, stanza no. 3.

The entire episode of Sita garlanding Lord Ram has been narrated in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/96 also.

We have seen earlier how Sita was dazed and stood motionless with the garland. Her friends had told her to put the garland on Lord Ram in verse no. 5 above, but still Sita did not. The reason for her delaying is explained in verse no. 6, that she was overwhelmed and rendered immobile with emotions of affection and love for the Lord.

People were watching intently from all directions. So these 'clever and wise' friends thought that instead of telling Sita quietly and whispering into her ears not to delay any further because the whole assembly was watching, they decided to sing appropriate songs that are sung when the victory garland is actually put on the victor. This was a master stroke by them—because it alerted Sita and pulled her out of her loving reverie.

To those watching from their seats in the arena which were at a considerable distance from the spot where Sita was standing, surrounded by her friends, in front of Lord Ram, the songs camouflaged the delay in Sita putting the garland around the neck of the Lord. As soon as they began singing appropriate songs, the people sitting around the extensive area of the arena thought that the garland has been put on Lord Ram, whereas the fact was that it still was in Sita's hands. Meanwhile, Sita suddenly realized her folly, and immediately put the garland around the neck of the Lord. This clever ploy of the friends had saved Sita from great embarrassment and scandalous gossip.

²While in the first interpretation of this verse, Sita hadn't put the garland on Lord Ram when the friends started singing songs so as to subtly alert her, to remind her to go ahead and not delay any further as her standing with the garland without actually putting it on the Lord is creating an extremely piquant and uneasy situation, the second interpretation is that they began to sing once Sita had put the garland on the Lord.

This verse is a typical instance of the wonder in Tulsidas' composition—that a single statement can be interpreted and read in a variety of ways, depending on the way the

reader visualises the actual events as they may have unfolded at the time of their happening.]

सौ०. रघुबर उर जयमाल देखि देव बरिसहिं सुमन ।
सकुचे सकल भुआल जनु बिलोकि रबि कुमुदगन ॥ २६४ ॥

sōraṭhā.

raghubara ura jayamāla dēkhi dēva barisahim sumana.
sakucē sakala bhu'āla janu bilōki rabi kumudagana. 264.

When the gods saw that the victory garland has adorned the chest of Lord Ram, they showered flowers (from the sky).

On the other hand, the kings (who had attempted to lift the bow but had failed) felt ashamed and shrank due to embarrassment and disgrace like the lily that shrivels up and closes its petals at the sight of the sun². (Sortha/Doha no. 264)

[Note—¹The gods have expressed their joy by two means—by showering flowers and by playing musical instruments. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262 where flowers have been showered upon the Lord; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes the same Doha no. 262 that says that musical instruments were played and dancing and singing had broken out in the sky.

Similar idea is expressed in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow hereinafter just below the present Sortha.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 238; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263.]

चौ०. पुर अरु ब्योम बाजने बाजे । खल भए मलिन साधु सब राजे ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

pura aru byōma bājanē bājē. khala bha'ē malina sādhu saba rājē. 1.

Musical instruments started playing in the city (of Janakpur) as well as in the sky (i.e. in the heavens)¹. Those who were wicked went into depression (were dejected and depressed; they hid their faces), while those who were virtuous and saintly beamed with joy (i.e. became happy and joined in the celebrations)². (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/93, stanza no. 1 also.

²There were two categories of people—one who had a dominance of 'Tama Guna' or the evil qualities dominating their mind and heart, and the other who had the 'Sata Guna' or the virtuous qualities dominating their character.

The first category of people was that who were inherently wicked and inclined to be jealous with everyone, and enjoy when others suffer even if their sufferings won't do them any personal good. These people would have preferred that no one breaks the bow

and there was gloom and grief all around. Then they would have fodder for gossip and spreading of scandals, such as saying that Janak had done this and that misdeed in his life and it is the result of it that he has to suffer. They could not tolerate others being happy; celebration and festivities were like painful sores for them. This group of people included the selfish, haughty and over-jealous kings who had thrown all caution and principles of morality to the wind when thousands of them had together tried to move the bow without bothering the horrible consequences of their action upon the marital future of Sita if they had managed to move and break the bow. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 266; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 241; and (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263.

The second category of people was that who had seen a divine aura around Lord Ram and could judge the situation wisely, if not by anything else than at least by the use of common sense when they found that the mighty sage Vishwamitra was in the Lord's favour, and that amongst all those who were present as candidates vying to marry Sita, it was Lord Ram who fit the bill perfectly because of so many factors, such as his age that was in consonant with the age of Sita, his charm and beauty that matched Sita's, and his demeanours and manners, his elegance and dignity and the way he carried himself that was most suitable for someone who would become a royal groom and an honoured guest of the renowned kingdom of Janakpur. In this category of people we include those kings who desisted from participating in the bow lifting competition precisely for the reasons listed above. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5, that precedes Doha no. 241.

Amongst this category of wise people were those who were pious, holy and saintly who could see in the form of Lord Ram a personified form of the deity they worshipped—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 242.

The citizens of Janakpur also come under the second category because they would not have liked gloom and despair to descend upon the kingdom; they all wanted that Sita be married to Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 223; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7, that precedes Doha no. 252; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 8 that precede Doha no. 262 etc.

And of course, the family members of Sita, her parents and friends and other kith and kin, the gods in heaven and the sages and others on earth too come under the second category as all of them felt very happy when Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 263.]

सुर किंनर नर नाग मुनीसा । जय जय जय कहि देहिं असीसा ॥ २ ॥

sura kinnara nara nāga munīsā. jaya jaya jaya kahi dēhīṁ asīsā. 2.

All the pious and noble souls, such as the gods (sura), the kinnars (celestial dancers), the human beings (nara), the subterranean creatures represented by the 'Naagas' (nāga; serpents), and the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics (collectively called the 'munīsā')—all of them broke out in a chorus of praises for the Lord, Sri Ram. They collectively

blessed the Lord (dēhiṃ asīsā) and hailed his victory by chanting ‘Hail, Hail; Glory to the Lord (jaya jaya jaya kahi)!’ (2)

[Note—All these entities collectively represented the three levels of the world—viz. the gods and kinnars represented the heaven, the humans and the sages represented the terrestrial world, and the serpents represented the subterranean world.

In other words, the victory of Lord Ram was welcomed and celebrated by all the good creatures in this world, in whatever form they were. We have already read in verse no. 1 above that only those who were good at heart welcomed the Lord’s victory and celebrated the occasion. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 262.

A similar situation prevailed when Lord Ram won the war at Lanka and had slayed the demon king Ravana. At that time also, there was a chorus of praise and blessings for the Lord from all directions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 103.]

नाचहिं गावहिं बिबुध बधूटीं । बार बार कुसुमांजलि छूटीं ॥ ३ ॥

nācahiṃ gāvahiṃ bibudha badhūṭīṃ. bāra bāra kusumāñjali chūṭīṃ. 3.

All sorts of heavenly dames and damsels (such as the consorts of different gods of various denominations, as well as the celestial nymphs or dancers known as Apsaras) began dancing and singing merrily. They filled their hands with flowers and repeatedly sprinkled them (upon Lord Ram and Sita from the sky). (3)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 that precede Doha no. 262.]

जहँ तहँ बिप्र बेदधुनि करहीं । बंदी बिरिदावलि उच्चरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ taham̐ bipra bēdadhuni karahīṃ. bandī biridāvali uccarahīṃ. 4.

Here and there and everywhere, the Brahmins (individually as well as in groups) were chanting verses from the Vedas and the bards and minstrels were singing the glories of the royal dynasty. (4)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 262 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 5 in the context of the breaking of the bow, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194, as well as Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 195 in the context of the celebrations that marked the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers at Ayodhya.]

महि पाताल नाक जसु ब्यापा । राम बरी सिय भंजेउ चापा ॥ ५ ॥

mahi pātāla nāka jasu byāpā. rāma barī siya bhanjē’u cāpā. 5.

The auspicious news and glad tidings that Lord Ram has married Sita by breaking the bow spread to all corners of the world, such as the terrestrial world (earth), the nether world and the subterranean world. (5)

[Note—Refer also to (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262; and (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/93, stanza no. 3.]

करहिं आरती पुर नर नारी । देहिं निछावरि बित्त बिसारी ॥ ६ ॥

karahim āratī pura nara nārī. dēhim nichāvari bittā bisārī. 6.

The men and women folk of the city waved lighted lamps before the couple (Lord Ram and Sita) to ward off any bad effects of evil eyes or by evil spirits (in a ritual known as the ‘performing of the Aarti’)¹, and they gave away abundant gifts irrespective of their financial standing to celebrate the occasion as well as to invoke the blessings of the receivers of such gifts² for the welfare of the couple. (6)

[Note—An identical idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas in Baal Kand where the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers has been described.

¹Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194 that mentions the performance of the ritual of “Aarti” by the women folk of Ayodhya for the welfare of the newly born brothers.

The “Aarti” is a formal ritual in which lighted earthen lamps are arranged on a platter along with other items such as rice grains, coloured powder, incense sticks etc. and waved in a clockwise fashion or in a to-and-fro pattern before the person who is to be honoured or blessed.

Aarti is usually accompanied by showering of flowers upon the person who is being honoured or blessed, or putting a garland around his neck.

²Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the citizens of Ayodhya liberally gave away gifts and whatever valuables they had to anyone who sought them to celebrate the happy occasion of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers. Even those who received these gifts did not keep them for themselves, but they gave them to others in an all-pervading spirit of generosity and magnanimity, of celebration and festivities.]

सोहति सीय राम कै जोरी । छबि सिंगारु मनहुँ एक ठोरी ॥ ७ ॥

sōhati sīya rāma kai jōrī. chabi siṅgāru manahum̐ ēka ṭhōrī. 7.

The image of the couple, Sita and Lord Ram, looked so fabulous and fascinating as if personified forms of the virtues of beauty and love respectively have come together to stand beside each other. (7)

[Note—In this imagery, Lord Ram is likened to the virtue of love, and Sita to beauty.

Likening Lord Ram to the virtue of ‘love’ is very significant here because till this moment it was Sita who has been repeatedly depicted as the one who has developed affection for Lord Ram. There are many instances where her love and affection for the Lord have been stressed. On the other hand, Lord Ram has been portrayed as being the recipient of this affection.

This has happened during the bow-breaking event that is currently being described here {refer:--(i) Doha no. 257; (ii) Doha no. 258 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 1; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 259}, and earlier when Sita met Lord

Ram for the first time in the garden {refer:--(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 232; (ii) Doha no. 234 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 5.}

So it was necessary to make the record straight and point out that even Lord Ram had love and affection for Sita in equal measure in which she had them for him, as has been done in the present verse.

The fact that Sita was a personified form of beauty is undisputed. Even Lord Ram has acknowledged this. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 230 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; (ii) Doha no. 231; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 235; and (iv) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Again, Sita's beauty has been extensively described with the help of metaphors in Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

So we see that this verse acts as bridge to bring together the twin virtues of beauty and love so they form a formidable force to reckon with.]

सखीं कहहिं प्रभुपद गहु सीता । करति न चरन परस अति भीता ॥ ८ ॥

sakhīṁ kahahīṁ prabhupada gahu sītā. karati na carana parasa ati bhītā. 8.

Sita's friends told her to bow (or kneel) down to touch the feet of Lord Ram (as a gesture of showing respect to him, as well as to surrender or submit her self before the Lord). But Sita hesitated in touching the Lord's feet as she was afraid to do so. [As a result, she remained standing before Lord Ram.] (8)

[Note—The reason for Sita's reluctance and fear has been given in the next Doha no. 265 that follows below.

Touching the feet of elders, learned people, one's husband or parent or teacher etc, is a gesture of showing respect and honour to them is a tradition in vogue since ancient times. For instance, Lord Ram and Laxman had bowed and touched the feet of sage Vishwamitra at many places—viz. Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 238, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 239, etc.]

When king Janak had met sage Vishwamitra, he had knelt down and touched his head to the feet of the sage—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Earlier, when Lord Ram and Laxman had departed from Ayodhya to accompany sage Vishwamitra to the forest, the Lord had gone to touch the feet of his mother—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 Ka.

Later on in this story we read that when Lord Ram had gone to his mother to seek her permission to go to the forest, he had bowed at her feet—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52.

At the time of leaving Ayodhya, he had bid farewell to his father Dasrath as well as the royal priest sage Vasistha in the same way, by bowing at their feet—refer: Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 77; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 79.

Lord Ram had bowed at the feet of all elders, Brahmins and his Guru sage Vasistha before proceeding to the forest: refer—Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 79; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 81.

Moving further ahead we see that when Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, meets him in the forest where the former had gone to try to persuade the Lord to return to Ayodhya, he had also fallen at the feet of Lord Ram—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240.

Then we see that Hanuman, the monkey devotee of the Lord, had also fallen down at the feet of the Lord when they first met at the foothills of Mt. Rishyamook—refer: Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

दो०. गौतम तिय गति सुरति करि नहिं परसति पग पानि।
मन बिहसे रघुबंसमनि प्रीति अलौकिक जानि ॥ २६५ ॥

dōhā.

gautama tiya gati surati kari nahin parasati paga pāni.
mana bihasē raghubansamani prīti alaukika jāni. 265.

Remembering (recalling) the fate of sage Gautam's wife Ahilya, Sita was reluctant to touch the feet of Lord Ram¹.

'Raghubansamani' (Lord Ram, the gem of king Raghu's dynasty) realised the sublime and divine nature of Sita's love for him, and so he smiled internally (instead of feeling uneasy due to her hesitance to touch his feet)². (Doha no. 265)

[Note—¹Please refer to a detailed note on Ahilya appended to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 210 above.

The news of Ahilya turning from the visible gross form of a stone into an invisible subtle form as the wife of sage Guatam when Lord Ram touched her with the dust of his feet, and then ascending to the heaven to join her husband, had spread far and wide. Everyone in Janakpur was aware of it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 221.

Sita feared that if she touched the Lord's feet then chances are that her soul would also be freed from its gross body which the world recognised as 'Sita', the daughter of king Janak. She would then have to assume her original sublime form as goddess Laxmi. Well, how then will she serve Lord Ram, whom she knew to be a human form of Lord Vishnu, her eternal divine Lord in the heaven, and how will then she accompany him in a gross visual form on this earth to help him accomplish the task of killing the demons? Being the divine goddess Laxmi who is a consort of Lord Vishnu, she was taken into confidence by the Lord at the time of coming down to earth, and was told that she will have to play the role of a bait by which the demon king Ravana would be trapped and finally killed by Lord Vishnu in his human form as Lord Ram. We will read that the Lord reminded her of this role just prior to her abduction by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24.

So, if by chance Sita gets to leave her gross body as the daughter of king Janak and is transformed into goddess Laxmi by the mystical and powerful effect of touching Lord Ram's holy feet—which incidentally must be remembered, has a natural and inherent power to give liberation and deliverance to the soul of all living beings from the grossness that surrounds it in this world—then the whole plan devised to eliminate the demons and free the gods and the earth from their terror would fall apart. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Sita was undecided because she thought that if her gross body was discarded and replaced with a subtle form while her beloved Lord was still in his gross human form,

then how will she serve him and help him in carrying out his duty to give protection the gods and earth by eliminating the evil forces represented by the cruel demons.

But while the reason for Sita's hesitation was realised by Lord Ram, and he felt extremely happy in his heart, the wicked kings who were watching from the stands misinterpreted it as a sign of Sita's unwillingness to accept Lord Ram as her husband. Putting the 'victory garland' on the victor is one thing as no one could deny that Lord Ram had broken the bow and had publicly become eligible for this honour, but accepting him as a husband by Sita in a whole-hearted manner, without any reservation and with full submission, was another thing.

This misinterpretation of Sita's internal feelings for Lord Ram that was triggered by her delay to touch his feet was compounded by her delaying to put the garland around the Lord a few moments earlier—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 264 above. We shall soon read that the defeated and frustrated kings stood up in revolt menacingly, and there was a spectre of a fierce battle had sage Parashuram not arrived at that time. The sage's arrival was ostensibly was to seek revenge for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva, but it sent kings scrambling for cover because the sage was renowned to mercilessly punish kings at the slightest wrong committed by them. All these developments have been elaborately described below, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268.

²Lord Ram realised Sita's internal feelings as he was all-knowing and omniscient. We have already read how the Lord had judged Sita's love for him before he decided to actually break the bow. In this context, refer specially to (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 261 above.

The Lord had witnessed this behaviour of Sita earlier also in the garden where they had met for the first time. At that time also she had become so stunned at the sight of the Lord that she had been rendered completely immobile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 232.

So, the Lord was not surprised either when Sita delayed to put the garland on him, and when she delayed to touch his feet.]

चौ०. तब सिय देखि भूप अभिलाषे । कूर कपूत मूढ़ मन माखे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

taba siya dēkhi bhūpa abhilāṣē. kūra kapūta mūṛha mana mākhē. 1.

Then, looking at Sita (i.e. watching that she was reluctant to both put the garland on Lord Ram and also hesitating to bow down to touch his feet¹), some of the kings who had no scruples, were morally degenerate, were a scar on the reputation of their respective royal families, and were extremely stupid, rose up in revolt because they had a subdued and oppressed longing for Sita². (1)

[Note—¹Refer to an elaborate note appended to Doha no. 265 above.

These were the same kings who refused to heed sane advice given by their compatriots that they shouldn't try to break the bow and invite sure defeat and its attendant humiliation because all subtle indications are that Sita would be married to Lord Ram as he was not an ordinary human prince but Lord Vishnu and the one whom

even Lord Shiva, the lord of the bow that is to be broken, worships. Therefore, how can these ‘stupid and ill-witted’ kings expect Shiva to favour them instead of Lord Ram? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246.

²But these kings were so overcome with passion and lust on the one hand, and itching for a revenge for their abject defeat and humiliation when they failed to lift and string the great bow that they all threw all caution and decency to the wind and rose up in revolt, creating a pandemonium in the packed arena.

Their senseless action only added to their self-invited ridicule and public sensor and scorn as it not only proved their moral turpitude but also established the stupidity and perversion of their minds in the face of the fact that they had all failed to move the bow individually as well as jointly when thousands of them had tried to lift the bow simultaneously without bothering about the immorality and impropriety of this act. These wicked kings should have kept their wits together and remained silent, sitting quietly in their seats to avoid further embarrassment. They should have realized that they had already committed a grave sin by trying to break the bow in their thousands—because had they been successful, Sita would be married to ‘thousands of kings at the same time’, making her ‘a wife of all of them’ at once! It was, in the first place, such an extremely ridiculous and absurd proposition that it ought to have made them remorseful, regretful, repentant and shameful to the extreme. But on the contrary, they had now started shouting and making a mockery of themselves because these maddened kings’ mind and intellect and the common sense of propriety and probity were so much eclipsed by delusions that were driven by passion and fired by their jealous zeal to grab Sita at any cost that they had not thought of the huge negativity and ignominious consequences that would come in the wake of their creating a nuisance by their raucous behaviour that caused an un-called for pandemonium in the middle of a sober royal assembly of great kings and princes from all the corners of the world, especially when all those assembled had themselves witnessed the defeat of these mischief-mongers when the latter could not break the bow and returned to their seats with a down-cast head. These rascals did not even think of the negative name their respective families would get by their irrational and pervert behaviour.

As it turned out finally, they did get shame and ignominy. They were so extremely idiotic that inspite of seeing how Lord Ram had so easily broken the same bow which they could not as much as move in their thousands, they still wanted to challenge the authority and might of the Lord. Didn’t they witness Laxman’s anger a little while ago, and how even king Janak could not reprimand him? Didn’t they realise that Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita by breaking of the bow had the unreserved blessing of the mighty sage Vishwamitra whose mystical powers were well known? Didn’t they understand that Sita had already put the garland on Lord Ram, and for all practical purposes was his bride, and in this condition how immoral it is to even think of grabbing her and preventing her from marrying the Lord? Didn’t they realise that now Lord Ram and Laxman would wipe them out if they dared do any nonsense?

But still these stupid, ill-witted and pervert kings were so overwhelmed by lust and passions that they could not desist from making a last-ditch attempt to marry Sita.

Now, in the following verses we shall read what they did and said.]

उठि उठि पहिरि सनाह अभागे । जहँ तहँ गाल बजावन लागे ॥ २ ॥

uṭhi uṭhi pahiri sanāha abhāgē. jaham̐ taham̐ gāla bajāvana lāgē. 2.

These wretched kings rose from their seats one after another, tied their body armours (to get ready for battle), and began to boast. [What they said is narrated below in verse nos. 3-5.] (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/95, stanza no. 1 also.]

लेहु छड़ाइ सीय कह कोऊ । धरि बाँधहु नृप बालक दोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 तोरें धनुषु चाड़ नहिं सरई । जीवत हमहि कुअँरि को बरई ॥ ४ ॥
 जौं बिदेहु कछु करै सहाई । जीतहु समर सहित दोउ भाई ॥ ५ ॥

lēhu chaṛā'i sīya kaha kō'ū. dhari bām'dhahu nṛpa bālaka dō'ū. 3.
 tōrēn dhanuṣu cāṛa nahin sara'ī. jīvata hamahi ku'am'ri kō bara'ī. 4.
 jaum bidēhu kachu karai sahā'ī. jītaḥu samara sahita dō'u bhā'ī. 5.

Some of them ranted as follows—‘Snatch Sita by force, and capture and hold in bondage the two princes of the king (i.e. Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman). (3)

Merely breaking the bow won't suffice to satisfy his (Lord Ram's) desire (to marry Sita). Say, how can anyone dare to marry the princess as long as we are alive?

[To wit, let Ram be sure that the matter is not as easily settled as he thinks it to be. First he will have to prove his mettle, valour, strength and eligibility to marry such a great princess as Sita by vanquishing us in a combat if he wishes to fulfil his dream of marrying her. We smell a rat; there seems to be some cunning underhand method contrived to make him so easily break the mighty bow which our combined might failed to move even a fraction of an inch. No, it is not a cake-walk for him; never as long as we are around, and it is not going to be otherwise.] (4)

If Videha (king Janak) tries to help them (Lord Ram and Laxman), we will win him along with the two brothers in the battle.' (5)

[Note—The intention of the wicked kings was clear: they were ready for bloodshed. The reason is that passion and lust aside, they faced the prospect of shame, disgrace and humiliation when they returned empty-handed to their respective kingdoms. This was unacceptable by all of them. In their madness to save their dignity they thought that with all of them joining hands it would be very easy to defeat king Janak and his army in a battle if they tried to protect Sita and side with the two brothers.

This episode of Sita's marriage hinging on an absurd condition of breaking of a bow without considering other factors such as testing the qualifications, abilities, family history, personal character and temperament of the would-be groom, or even without consulting the girl whose entire future was at stake, and open declaration of war for such minor issues as marrying this or that girl, especially when she has already been officially declared as a bride of a particular man, is a sad and poignant commentary of the ways the society worked and the conditions that prevailed in ancient India.

We have read above that these kings were “stupid and ill-witted”. Didn't they realize that if king Janak decided to order his huge army to surround and disarm them, what would they do; what chance did they have against the huge army of Janakpur with only a few, a handful and a limited number of body-guards and soldiers who had accompanied them to Janakpur as escorts and official retinue that routinely accompanies a king going to attend an invitation?

Common sense says that they stood no chance, but passion and prospects of shame had the better of them when they decided to revolt.

Besides this logic, the other reason for them being decidedly “stupid” is that it was well known to them that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva, and they themselves had tried their best, both individually and jointly, to move it, but had failed miserably. The same bow was broken so easily by Lord Ram. Couldn’t they realize that there must be some hidden mystery in this development? They had been explicitly warned not to make a fool of themselves by wiser kings who had told them that Lord Ram and Sita were personified forms of the Lord and Mother of this world respectively, and that Lord Ram was worshipped even by Lord Shiva himself, but these kings paid no heed. These kings have also been described as being driven by passion and lust, as well as by arrogance and self-pride. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 246.]

साधु भूप बोले सुनि बानी । राजसमाजहि लाज लजानी ॥ ६ ॥
बलु प्रतापु बीरता बड़ाई । नाक पिनाकहि संग सिधाई ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ सूरता कि अब कहूँ पाई । असि बुधि तौ बिधि मुहँ मसि लाई ॥ ८ ॥

sādhū bhūpa bōlē suni bānī. rājasamājahi lāja lajānī. 6.
balu pratāpu bīratā barā’ī. nāka pinākahi saṅga sidhā’ī. 7.
sō’i sūratā ki aba kahum’ pā’ī. asi budhi tau bidhi muham’ masi lā’ī. 8.

When the good kings heard this boastful outburst of the wicked kings, they sternly admonished and rebuked them, saying—‘Shame to all of you! In fact, this assembly of kings and princes has acted in such a disgraceful manner that if ‘shame’ had been personified then it would have shied away from coming here and show its face. (6)

Your boast of having great strength, bravery and fame has already been shattered and cut to pieces with the breaking of the bow. [Or, all your pretensions of strength, valour and reputation of being brave have already been crushed as soon as the bow broke.] (7)

Now say, from where have you retrieved these qualities of bravery and valour again? [Or, these qualities had already vanished with the breaking of the bow in public, so tell us from where have you got them back again?]

It is because you fellows are so foolish and dull-headed that the Creator decided to blacken your faces in full public view in this manner. (8)

[Note—These good kings are the ones who had seen the writing on the wall. They had realized that Sita is destined to marry Lord Ram, and had tried to persuade the stupid kings to have common sense and desist from trying to break the bow. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-4, and 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.]

So when they found that inspite of Lord Ram’s clear victory and the evidence of the broken bow lying in front for anyone to see these arrogant kings are hell-bent on creating nuisance, they intervened and rebuffed these stupid fellows. They have come to attend a marriage ceremony and not to a battle-field!

Didn’t these stupid kings realize that in an open competition only one person wins, whoever he is. And in this case it was Lord Ram, and he himself was a prince. So there was no reason for creating such a fuss and rubble-rousing. Had Lord Ram not belonged to

a royal family or some higher class in the society then there was a ground to argue that since Sita belonged to a royal family then only a prince or king befitting her stature can marry her, and nobody else. But in this case this question does not arise at all as the family of Lord Ram was as reputed as that of Sita.

A shameful and disgraceful act by a handful of pervert and shameless kings would taint and cause ignominy to the entire society of kings and princes for no fault of theirs. Hence, the wise amongst them stood up to rebuke the nonsensical behaviour of their brethren.

Refer also to Tulsidas' 'Kavitawali', Baal Kand, verse nos. 15 where the good kings have scolded these wicked kings.]

दो०. देखहु रामहि नयन भरि तजि इरिषा महु कोहु ।
लखन रोषु पावकु प्रबल जानि सलभ जनि होहु ॥ २६६ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhahu rāmahi nayana bhari taji iriṣā madu kōhu.
lakhana rōṣu pāvaku prabala jāni salabha jani hōhu. 266.

Look at Lord Ram and imbibe the beautiful sight of the Lord till your eyes are fully satisfied with it. Discard the attitude of jealousy and arrogance, and overcome your futile anger.

Laxman's anger is no less than a raging fire, and so be ware. Don't allow yourselves to become insects that get burnt when they voluntarily come too close to a burning fire. (Doha no. 266)

[Note—The good kings had advised the same thing—to enjoy the rare sight of seeing the beautiful form of Lord Ram—earlier also before the bow breaking ceremony had commenced. They themselves concentrated in enjoying this sight. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.

The beautiful form of Lord Ram in the arena has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244.

Laxman's anger was so violent that the earth shook and its support, the Diggajs, had trembled out of fear—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. बैनतेय बलि जिमि चह कागू । जिमि ससु चहै नाग अरि भागू ॥ १ ॥
जिमि चह कुसल अकारन कोही । सब संपदा चहै सिवद्रोही ॥ २ ॥
लोभी लोलुप कल कीरति चहई । अकलंकता कि कामी लहई ॥ ३ ॥
हरि पद बिमुख परम गति चाहा । तस तुझार लालचु नरनाहा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bainatēya bali jimi caha kāgū. jimi sasu cahai nāga ari bhāgū. 1.
 jimi caha kusala akārana kōhī. saba sampadā cahai sivadrōhī. 2.
 lōbhī lōlupa kala kīratī cahaī. akalaṅkatā ki kāmī lahaī. 3.
 hari pada bimukha parama gati cāhā. tasa tumhāra lālacu naranāhā. 4.

[In these four verses, the good kings have ridiculed their greedy and haughty friends, the wicked kings who have stood up in revolt and want are itching for a bloody fight to take Sita away, by comparing them to a number of entities whose attempt to do the impossible make them a laughing stock in this world.]

Just like a crow wanting to grab the share kept aside for Garud (during a religious ceremony), or just like a humble rabbit coveting the share of a lion (who is so strong that he can comfortably afford to be an enemy of an elephant without fear), [1] ---

--- Or just like a man who is accustomed to become angry without any cause expecting to have welfare, happiness and peace, or just like someone who is inimical to Lord Shiva expecting to have good fortunes and prosperity in life, [2] ---

--- Or just like a greedy, indulgent, selfish and rapacious man ever expecting to have any kind of credit, a good name and worthy reputation, or just like a lustful, lascivious and promiscuous man ever hoping to acquire a reputation of an immaculate character and trustworthiness, [3] ---

--- Or just like a person opposed to Lord Hari's holy feet (Hari = Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord) ever imagining that he will have liberation and deliverance for himself (i.e. freedom for his soul from the world and its horrors, freedom from the cycle of birth and death)—

Oh foolish kings, your desires and longings (for Sita, for victory over the two brothers, for acquiring some fame, for saving your lost prestige and honour etc.) are similar to the instances cited above by us. [4]

[In other words, you will never succeed in your stupid endeavours, you will never get what you desire, and you will never get any chance of having any sort of honour, but instead you will only invite further disgrace and humiliation for yourselves by indulging in utter nonsense and acting imprudently.

At least till now you had an excuse that it was Lord Shiva's bow which you did not actually want to break for the fear of causing insult to the Great Lord of the world, Lord Mahadeva, Shiva, but had gone to the bow to touch it and pay your respects to it, but what you all are up to now, declaring your intention to fight a battle to take Sita away and capture the two brothers, will close all doors for you to somehow gracefully save your ugly faces from abject disgrace and ignominy. Come on, have common sense, and stop being fanatically mad and creating nuisance to put all of us of the kingly class to utter shame in the annals of history. So you better shut up and sit down before it's too late.

Refer also to 'Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/15 in this context.] (1-4)

[Note—The wise kings were stunned and confounded by the unwarranted belligerent attitude of the wicked kings. First, they had not heeded the sane advice given to them by their wiser compatriots to desist from trying to lift the bow and make a mockery of themselves, then they had failed to move the bow individually, and finally they had miserably failed to do it even when thousands of them joined hands to try their combined

might against a single opponent which was only an old and rusty 'bow', something that would be otherwise considered as absolutely inconsequential and easy to handle.

Meanwhile, king Janak was so gracious that he had kept quiet even when thousands of kings were trying to move the bow simultaneously—though he would have been within his rights to disallow it and could have strongly objected to this highly unethical act of these wicked kings because his daughter could not be allowed to marry all of them at the same time if they managed to somehow break the bow. Besides this, it was common sense that the king had meant that a 'single individual who would be able to break the bow first would marry his daughter Sita, without any second thoughts and imposition of any other subjective conditions'. No father would allow this nonsense be perpetrated right in his front in the name of his daughter. But still Janak has maintained his calm. Couldn't these wretched kings give king Janak a credit for showing so much restraint when all of them tried to break the bow jointly by not ordering his army to imprison all of them as they were violating principles of morality and proper conduct and attempting to bring disgrace to his entire dynasty? And instead of empathising with him and sharing his sorrows at the doomed fate of his daughter, they were now preparing for bloodshed?

So the wise kings took strong exception to the wild act of these greedy and arrogant kings who failed to accept their undeniable fate gracefully, politely, and with a smile in a sportsman-like spirit instead of showing the negative side of their character. Their hilarious act of belligerence and dare-devilry would bring disgrace and disrespect to the entire community of kings and princes to which even the noble-hearted and good kings belonged. Hence it was totally unacceptable to the latter category of kings that any nuisance be allowed to be perpetrated by their disillusioned and deluded brethren in their presence.

In all probability, if these wicked kings had indeed managed to go ahead with their plan to fight and forcefully snatch Sita, the good kings would have risen against them and fight alongside Janak and the two brothers. But as the things happened, this situation did not arise because sage Parashuram came in angrily to the arena just at that time, and seeing the angry sage those kings who were shouting and creating a ruckus a while ago went into hiding out of fear for their own lives! We shall soon read about it below.

Meanwhile, let us examine the similes cited by the good kings to rebuke the wicked ones.

(a) Chaupai line no. 1 = (i) The first instance is of the crow trying to eat the share kept aside for Garud. It is a normal practice during religious ceremonies that out of the offerings, a small part is kept aside for 'Garud' (the divine Eagle who is a mount of Lord Vishnu) along with parts kept aside for other gods and holy spirits. A hungry crow, which is also a bird like the Garud but is employed as a metaphor for a contemptuous, sinful and greedy creature, watches from a distance, coveting this share of Garud which is a divine bird. As soon as this crow hops near and tries to touch this share of Garud, it is shooed off contemptuously. The wicked kings are like the crow, Lord Ram is like Garud, and Sita is like the offering of the religious ceremony. She is meant to be married to Lord Ram, but these wicked crow-like kings are coveting her.

The comparison of the wicked kings with a 'crow' is very apt because like this bird which keeps on greedily eyeing the offering and crowing continuously for it until its voice becomes hoarse, and finally shooed away or even beaten back if it dares to come too near the holy offering intended for Garud, these failed and frustrated kings are also unsuccessfully trying to grab Sita though they know, like the wretched crow, that they won't succeed.

(ii) The lion is so powerful that it does not fear the mighty elephant that is huger in size than it; it easily kills the elephant. The lion may eat its hunt over a number of days,

little at a time. A greedy rabbit eyes the kill, and when the lion's attention is diverted it tries to steal the food that is meant for the lion. The foolish rabbit does not realize that if the lion discovers that the wretched rabbit has been stealing over his shoulders, it would be killed instantly. Can the humble rabbit oppose and fight and win over the lion that can easily kill the mighty elephant which is hundred times larger and stronger than the petty rabbit? But in its ignorance the rabbit does not realize this but thinks that it can have its way with the lion. A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 28.

(b) Chaupai line no. 2 = (iii) A person who is inclined to be angry and wrathful for no reason, or for inconsequential reasons, cannot ever hope to find mental peace and happiness. He will surround himself with enemies instead of friends. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38.

(iv) The next example is that of a person who is opposed to Lord Shiva. Shiva is the "Maha-Deva", the Great God. When a person can't expect his welfare by opposing ordinary lords and masters of this world under whose domain he lives, how can he imagine that he will live happily by opposing the 'Great Lord' of the world, Lord Shiva? Kamdeo had dared to tease Lord Shiva and was reduced to ashes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 83.

(c) Chaupai line no. 3 = (v) Similarly, a greedy, indulgent and lascivious man, a man who is haughty and arrogant, will only invite dishonour and ignominy instead of any good name or honour. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand—(i) Doha no. 38; (ii) Doha no. 23.

(vi) And finally, a person who is opposed to the Lord God, the Lord of the world known as Lord Hari (Vishnu), can only live in a fool's paradise if he expects any welfare for his soul, if he aspires for attaining liberation and deliverance for himself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 5 that precedes Doha no. 23.

The good kings essentially advised their angry brethrens that they cannot expect to have any welfare by opposing Lord Ram who is a personified form of the Supreme Being. An identical idea was conveyed by Angad to Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, when he was sent by Lord Ram as a messenger to the court of Ravana in an attempt to avoid the ruinous war of Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 27.

These deluded kings must realize that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince, but the Lord of the world in a personified form (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246). Even Ravana's wife Mandodari had advised her husband the same thing (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14), and once again Angad had also warned him of this fact (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26). But unfortunately like Ravana, these wretched kings won't listen.]

कोलाहलु सुनि सीय सकानी । सखीं लवाइ गई जहँ रानी ॥ ५ ॥

रामु सुभायँ चले गुरु पाहीं । सिय सनेहु बरनत मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kōlāhalu suni sīya sakānī. sakhīm lavā'i ga'īm jaham' rānī. 5.

rāmu subhāyam' calē guru pāhīm. siya sanēhu baranata mana māhīm. 6.

When Sita saw the pandemonium created by the wicked and boastful kings and heard the noise and the raucous created by them, she was frightened (because she feared for the worst and the unexpected, as she had all along been watching the mad and fidgety

behaviour of this wretched kings, and she had heard how quickly such situations go out of control and lead to violence and all sorts of misdemeanours).

So, her companions quickly escorted her back to the queen-mother for safety. (5)

Meanwhile, with Sita leaving the place, Lord Ram too decided to go to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) as there was no point in remaining standing there any longer. On the way, he kept on praising in his heart Sita's affection for him.

[This shows that the madness of the kings and the tumult they created had no effect on the Lord. He wasn't even a bit afraid of these kings just like a lion not being afraid of a herd of trumpeting mad elephants.] (6)

[Note—Sita had an inkling of what was to come. Remember: She was a princess, and was aware of how bloody wars were occasionally fought by kings and princes over a woman. Before Lord Ram broke the bow, she had observed how these kings were greedily eyeing her, and how they had put all morality and principles of propriety to the wind when they attempted to lift the bow together in their thousands.

She was now afraid that these kings would try to hide their frustration and disgrace by indulging in warfare. So she was quickly scurried by her escorting companions to her mother, the queen, for safety.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram gave a damn to these rascals. Remember: Lord Ram and Laxman had fearlessly faced and effortlessly killed ferocious and blood-thirsty demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210).

So, when the Lord hadn't feared the demons, there was no question of his fearing these human kings. Rather, his attention was fixed on Sita and her love for him. This verse is a representative one that indicates the mental condition of all men who are about to be married to their beloved. For some time their mind and heart seemed obsessed, as if possessed, by the thought of their beloved, and they become oblivious of everything else, even of a great danger that might be lurking in the corner.]

रानिन्ह सहित सोचबस सीया । अब धौं बिधिहि काह करनीया ॥ ७ ॥

भूप बचन सुनि इत उत तकहीं । लखनु राम डर बोलि न सकहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāninha sahita sōcabasa sīyā. aba dhaum bidhihi kāha karaniyā. 7.

bhūpa bacana suni ita uta takahīm. lakhanu rāma ḍara bōli na sakahīm. 8.

Hearing the mad rantings of the angry kings (that they would snatch Sita, that they will imprison the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, and that they would defeat king Janak if he decides to intervene on the behalf of the two brothers in the battle that is bound to ensue), Sita and the queen became extremely worried as to what would happen now according to the destiny determined by the Creator¹. (7)

Meanwhile, upon hearing the boastful words of these kings, Laxman looked became irritated and fidgetedly looked here and there with great annoyance. He wanted to speak out (just like he had sternly rebuked Janak a while ago), but desisted from doing so out of fear of annoying Lord Ram.² (8)

[Note—¹No one can be certain what the destiny holds for him or her. There is an old adage that says 'there are many a slips between the cup and the lip'. When everything appeared to be going in the right direction and things had started taking an upswing after the harrowing hours of uncertainties when no one had been able to move the bow and

king Janak had virtually declared the ceremony closed and that Sita would have to remain unmarried, there was a sudden ray of hope and a light at the end of the dark tunnel when sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to break the bow and let Janak overcome his grief, and at the end of the tense moments that followed the Lord had actually broken the bow into two, thereby settling the issue for all times to come. And then, as if a thunderstroke from the blue sparked by some ill-fortune, this nasty situation of revolt by the defeated kings has arisen.

So, Sita and her mother became remorseful and lamented at Sita's misfortunes as they contemplated at the mysterious and stern ways of the Creator who shows no mercy and compassion when deciding the destiny of a person, placing the latter on a bed of roses at one moment and then tossing him or her on charcoals at the next. Both the daughter and her mother were in a quandary, not knowing what to do and how to respond.

²Laxman never did anything without the permission of his elder brother, Lord Ram. Even when he had spoken out against Janak a while ago, he had first taken permission from Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 252). But at that time the Lord was sitting near him, while in the present situation he is at a distance from Laxman as he is near the bow.

Remember: It was a huge arena, and things were organized and planned on a grand scale. The bow was kept in the center and the seats for the guests were in a circle all around it like we have in modern-day sport stadiums. The bow must have been separated from the sitting galleries by a distance of, say, roughly a hundred or so metres. So, at the time when the kings started creating a raucous, Lord Ram was far away from Laxman and the latter had no opportunity to seek the Lord's permission to bluntly face these boastful kings and show them their ground. This made Laxman fidgety with irritation. On the one hand he was finding hard to suppress his anger and was eager to vent his ire at the kings, and on the other hand he could not do anything without Lord Ram's permission. And since the Lord was at a distance there was no choice for Laxman but to remain silent, though he must have been edgy and muttering curses under his breath for these wicked kings!

Just read the Doha that follows below to get an idea of the anger which Laxman was trying to suppress.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/95, stanza nos. 2-3.]

दो०. अरुन नयन भृकुटी कुटिल चितवत नृपन्ह सकोप ।
मनहुँ मत्त गजगन निरखि सिंघकिसोरहि चोप ॥ २६७ ॥

dōhā.

aruna nayana bhr̥kuṭī kuṭila citavata nṛpanha sakōpa.
manahum̐ matta gajagana nirakhi siṅghakisōrahi cōpa. 267.

His (Laxman's) eyes became red and his eyebrows curved menacingly as he looked angrily at the kings. His mental condition and demeanours were like a lion's young cub which gets excited when it sees a group of trumpeting elephants. (Doha no. 267)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/95, stanza nos. 2-3 also.]

Bravery and fearlessness is in the blood of a lion, it's his natural character, and it is inherited by its cub. Elephants are proud of their huge and strong bodies. When they walk they trample underfoot humble creatures and young plants without any bother; they

rampage in the forest uprooting trees and breaking their branches. When a wild elephant is in heat, no animal dare face it. The only adversary of this elephant is the 'king of the forest', i.e. a lion. The lion is not at all afraid of the elephant, and it cleverly kills even the wildest and the strongest of elephants.

This trait of the parent lion is inherited by its cub. So when the cub sees a group of trumpeting elephants, it gets excited and wants to attack them.

This metaphor is cited here to indicate how Laxman felt. The boasting kings are likened to the group of trumpeting wild elephants, and Laxman to the lion's young cub.]

चौ०. खरभरु देखि बिकल पुर नारीं । सब मिलि देहिं महीपन्ह गारीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kharabharu dēkhi bikala pura nārīm. saba mili dēhīm mahīpanha gārīm. 1.

When the women-folk of the city saw the tumult, they became restless, and all of them joined to unanimously curse the kings (who were creating the raucous). (1)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/95, stanza nos. 2-3 also.

When everything appeared to be settled and the tide seemed to have turned in favour when Lord Ram was a clear victor as he had broken the bow in front of everyone, when Sita had already put the marriage garland on Lord Ram and there was no turning back from it, the claim of these pervert, greedy and haughty kings that they won't allow Sita to be married to anyone else other than themselves though none of them could move the bow for as much as even a fraction of an inch, what to talk of lifting and breaking it, and that merely breaking the bow was not the determining factor to decide who will marry her, was as hilarious and ridiculous as it was improper, pervert and wicked because it was the declared condition that whosoever breaks the bow would marry Sita, and they had entered the competition with full knowledge of this singular condition.

So, instead of accepting failure with dignity, self-respect and a spirit of competition, these rascals were showing their true colours possessed by an evil mind that is driven by wickedness and perversion.

So, the citizenry vehemently cursed these wicked kings for their rashness, for their lack of scruples, for their imprudence and impertinence.]

तेहिं अवसर सुनि सिव धनु भंगा । आयउ भृगुकुल कमल पतंगा ॥ २ ॥

tēhīm avasara suni siva dhanu bhaṅgā. āya'u bhr̥gukula kamala pataṅgā. 2.

Just at that moment, sage Parashuram, who was like a sun with respect to the lotus representing the great family of sage Bhrigu (bhr̥gukula kamala pataṅgā)¹, came there when he heard that Lord Shiva's bow has been broken². (2)

[Note—¹Sage Parashuram was born in the line of sages that traced their origin to sage Bhrigu. The metaphor of 'the sun and the lotus flower' is used to mean that Parashuram gave great fame and glory to this family of great sages who felt happy that he was a

member of their race just like the lotus flower that feels so happy when the sun rises in the sky that it opens its petals to indicate its joy at the sight of the sun.

Refer also to: Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/18—1/22.

Now, let us read in brief about this great sage Parashuram whose name literally means “Ram with a battle-axe”.

It is believed that he was the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Sahastraarjun. The story in brief is as follows:--

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. Once he approached the Ocean and asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni’s son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun’s sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as ‘Kamdhenu’ or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni’s brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat’s Aashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

The Shiva-Puran has narrated the story of sage Parashuram as follows—

There was a king named Gadhi. His daughter was name Satyavati. Satyavati was married to the sage Richika. Richika arranged for a spectacular sacrifice. Some rice pudding was obtained from the yajna and Richika gave it to his wife Satyavati.

He said, ‘Split this rice pudding into two halves. Eat half yourself and give the remaining half to your mother. Here, let me divide it. This is your half and that is your mother’s. We are Brahmins. So we will have a son who will display the traits of a

Brahmin. Your father is a Kshatriya, and your mother will have a son who will behave like a Kshatriya.’

Saying this, Richika went off to meditate in the forest. But mother and daughter managed to mix up their halves. In the course of his meditations, Richika realized that Satyavati was going to give birth to a Brahmin son who would display Kshatriya traits.

Through his powers, he managed to postpone this birth by a generation. So Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. It was Jamadagni’s son Parashuram who exhibited all the Kshatriya like characteristics.

Gadhi’s son was Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra was born a Kshatriya. But because of the mixing up of the rice pudding, Vishvamitra turned out to be Brahmin-like.

There was a king of the Haihaya dynasty named Arjun. He had a thousand arms. He had also obtained the boon that flaming fire itself would be perpetually present on the tip of his arrow. Whenever he shot an arrow, the fire from the tip of the arrow burnt up the target. In this fashion, Arjuna used to burn up villages, cities and forests. He once burnt up the hermitages of sages. And one of the sages cursed Arjun that he would be killed by Parashuram.

Parashurama learnt the art of fighting from Shiva himself. While Parashuram was away learning how to fight, Arjuna arrived in Jamadagni’s hermitage. Jamadagni had a wonderful cow (dhenu), known as a kamadhenu because it produced whatever objects one asked (Kama) from it. Using this Kamadhenu, Jamadagni treated Arjun and his entree retinue to a royal feast.

Arjun asked Jamadangi to give him this cow, but the sage refused. Arjun then asked his soldiers to forcibly take away the cow. But just as this was going on, Parashuram arrived. He killed Arjun, slicing off Arjun’s thousand arms in the process.

Having disposed of Arjun, Parashuram went off to meditate and pay another visit to Shiva.

Taking advantage of Parashuram’s absence, Arjun’s sons invaded Jamadagni’s hermitage. They killed Jamadagni. When Parashurama returned, he exacted vengeance for this evil deed. He killed Arjuna’s sons. Since Arjuna and his sons happened to be Kshatriyas, Parashuram also killed all the Kshatriyas in the world. He did this not once, but twenty-one times over. Why twenty-one times? The reason was that there were twenty-one weapon-marks on the dead Jamadagni’s body.

But killing was a crime and Parashuram had committed a sin. As penance, Parashuram donated cows and performed a lot of Tapa. He also arranged an Ashvamedha Yagya, the great horse-sacrifice. All this did not prove to be atonement enough. To complete the penance, Parashuram sought the advice of the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa told him to perform the donation that is known as Tulaa-Purush. A Tula (or ‘Tulaa-danda’) is a pair of scales; the person (Purush) who is performing the donation is placed on one side of the weighing scale. On the other side are placed objects like honey, clarified butter, molasses, clothing and gold. The weight of the objects being donated has to be equal to the weight of the person performing the donation. This is known as ‘Tulaa-purush’. Parashuram performed Tulaa-purusha and was freed from his sin.

²When Lord Ram had broken the bow its thunderous sound was heard in every corner of the world. All the gods as well as the sages knew about it, and they had rejoiced on the occasion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 2 that preceded Doha no. 263.

It was not a secret that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva. King Janak had openly declared it to be so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 252. Everyone knew it to be so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 262.

Now, when sage Parashuram heard about it, he became very angry, as he interpreted this breaking of the bow as an insult of his revered deity Lord Shiva. So he took his battle-axe and rushed to the site to punish the guilty.

Tulsidas has cleverly conceived of the idea of the arrival of the sage at the site of the bow breaking ceremony at the moment when the kings were itching for a bloody fight and Laxman was getting ready to give them a befitting reply to dramatically turn the tide of events in a favourable manner and effortlessly steer clear of bloody showdown that was otherwise imminent. This is because as soon as the angry kings saw the sage, they were so scared that they tried to hide themselves from view like a quail hiding when the hawk swoops down on it (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268 below).

At the same time, Tulsidas wanted to highlight the fact that not even sage Parashuram, who was reputed to kill members of the Kshatriya race, the warrior race, at the drop of a hat at the slightest provocation (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 272), could do any harm to the two brothers, that neither Lord Ram nor Laxman was afraid of him, and that the sage at last realized that Lord Ram was indeed a personified form of Lord Vishnu (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285 below).

This is in consonance with Tulsidas' entire effort in writing his epic books on the story of Lord Ram—that is to highlight the divinity of the Lord and to treat him as the Supreme Being himself personified. Every event and every opportunity has been used to underscore this point. We will read below how sage Parashuram realizes this fact, and then gives Lord Ram the 'Sarang bow' that is held by Lord Vishnu (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8).

However, Tulsidas was well aware of the fact that the other renowned versions of the story of Lord Ram, cited herein below, depict the arrival of the sage while the marriage party was on its way back to the kingdom of Ayodhya. So in deference to these versions and to show his respects for their authors, Tulsidas has briefly referred to this meeting in his book 'Janki Mangal' which is exclusively dedicated to the theme of Lord Ram's marriage with Janki, or Sita. In this book, sage Parashuram meets Lord Ram, Laxman and their father king Dasrath, vents his anger and then goes back subdued—refer: Janki Mangal, verse nos. 177-179.

The other famous versions of the story of Ramayana mentioned herein above where sage Parashuram has arrived when the marriage party was on its way back to Ayodhya instead of at the venue of the marriage itself are the following—(i) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Baal Kand, Canto 7; and (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 74, verse nos. 13-24—to Canto 76.]

देखि महीप सकल सकुचाने । बाज झपट जनु लवा लुकाने ॥ ३ ॥

dēkhi mahīpa sakala sakucānē. bāja jhapaṭa janu lavā lukānē. 3.

When the kings (who were up in arms and restless for a bloody showdown) saw the angry sage (Parashuram), they were so scared that they tried to hide themselves from view like a quail hiding when the hawk swoops down on it. (3)

[Note—Tulsidas has cleverly conceived of the idea of the arrival of the sage at the site of the bow breaking ceremony at the moment when the kings were itching for a bloody fight and Laxman was getting ready to give them a befitting reply to dramatically turn the tide

of events in a favourable manner and effortlessly steer clear of bloody showdown that was otherwise imminent. Refer to a detailed note appended to verse no. 2 above.

The metaphor of the hawk 'swooping down' on the poor quail indicates that the sage came almost running to the venue from his hermitage in the mountains, precisely Mt. Mahendraa-chal, prepared to punish anyone who broke the bow. And as soon as the kings saw him, they scrambled for cover like the terrified quail.

Well, this is very dramatic. While thousands of kings who prided themselves for their valour and strength, who were a moment ago boasting of snatching Sita and imprisoning Lord Ram and Laxman as well as defeating the entire army of Janak, are now scampering for cover to hide themselves from the view of the angry sage Parashuram because they feared that he will chop-off their heads with his battle-axe without even giving them a chance to explain themselves or protect themselves, Lord Ram and Laxman stood fearlessly and nonchalantly as if nothing had happened.

So we see how Tulsidas has expertly employed this episode to underscore the inherent strength, authority and power that the two brothers had. This incident is the second in the series of many such events that would emphasise this point. The first event, as we all know, was when the two brothers had faced and killed the fierce demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.]

गौरि सरीर भूति भल भ्राजा । भाल बिसाल त्रिपुंड बिराजा ॥ ४ ॥
सीस जटा ससिबदनु सुहावा । रिसबस कछुक अरुन होइ आवा ॥ ५ ॥
भृकुटी कुटिल नयन रिस राते । सहजहुँ चितवत मनहुँ रिसाते ॥ ६ ॥
बृषभ कंध उर बाहु बिसाला । चारु जनेउ माल मृगछाला ॥ ७ ॥
कटि मुनिबसन तून दुइ बाँधे । धनु सर कर कुठारु कल काँधे ॥ ८ ॥

gauri sarīra bhūti bhala bhrājā. bhāla bisāla tripuṇḍa birājā. 4.
sīsa jaṭā sasibadanu suhāvā. risabasa kachuka aruna hō'i āvā. 5.
bhṛkuṭī kuṭila nayana risa rātē. sahajahum' citavata manahum' risātē. 6.
br̥ṣabha kandha ura bāhu bisālā. cāru janē'u māla mṛgachālā. 7.
kaṭi munibasana tūna du'i bāmdhēm. dhanu sara kara kuṭhāru kala kām̐dhēm. 8.

[These five verses, nos. 4-8, describe the glorious image or physical form and vestiture of sage Parashuram.]

The ash that is smeared over his fair-complexioned body looks magnificent. The three horizontal lines of the religious mark known as the 'Tripund' (that is worn by devotees of Lord Shiva) adorn his broad forehead. (4)

There was a matted lock of hairs on his head. His bright moon-like face, that was otherwise very charming, now however looked a bit red with anger. (5)

With knitted and curved eyebrows as well as eyes that are virtually effusing anger, even when he glances anywhere in a causal manner (without any particular intention or meaning any harm) it gives the impression that he is looking there in anger¹. (6)

His shoulders were well-built and muscular like those of a strong bull. His arms are long, and his chest is broad. He wore a magnificent sacred thread (across his chest), a

wonderful garland (that was draped on his chest; or a rosary that was around his neck), and a deer-skin (that was wrapped around the upper part of his body). (7)

Around his waist was tied a piece of cloth like the one worn by hermits, and to its fastening cord were tied two quivers on either side of his hip. He held a bow and arrows in his two hands, while a battle-axe was tied to his shoulder. (8)

[Note—¹We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 269 that “even when the sage glanced at any of the kings casually in a normal friendly way, that individual was so terrified that he thought that the span of his life has come to an end—i.e. the sage has selected him to vent his anger”.

Why were the kings so terrified at the mere sight of sage Parashuram? Doha no. 268 says that Parashuram’s general attire and bearing, his general appearance was like that of a serene and dispassionate sage, but the deeds that he did were very cruel, such as relentlessly killing members of the princely class for whimsical reasons. The general physical description of the sage as narrated above is in consonance with the appearance of any other great sage, except the last half of verse no. 8 that describes him as having quivers tied to the hip, a battle-axe tied on his shoulders, and a bow and arrows held in the hands. This is the physical sign that he was a warrior sage.

Normally he would be calm and poised like any other great sage of repute, but when he became angry he spouted fire and brimstone. This is indicated by his reddened eyes and curved eyebrows.

So, when he approached the kings with fiery eyes, they lost their wits and feared the worst.]

दो०. सांत बेषु करनी कठिन बरनि न जाइ सरूप ।
धरि मुनितनु जनु बीर रसु आयउ जहँ सब भूप ॥ २६८ ॥

dōhā.

sānta bēṣu karanī kaṭhina barani na jā'i sarūpa.
dhari munitanu janu bīra rasu āya'u jaham̐ saba bhūpa. 268.

It is very difficult to describe the real character, form and nature of sage Parashuram because though his external attire and general appearance resembled those of great sages, but his deeds and acts were cruel (and just the opposite of what one would expect from some great sage whom he resembled by his appearance).

[But if one were to describe him using a simile or a metaphor, then it can be said that when sage Parashuram came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony—] It appears that the qualities of a gallant warrior and a valiant hero have taken the glorious form of a hermit or a sage and have arrived at the place where all the kings were present. (Doha no. 268)

[Note—Sage Parashuram’s external appearance presents a picture in contrast. On the one hand he wears all the signs of a sage or a hermit—viz. ash smeared on the body, the Tripund mark on his forehead, matted hairs on the head, a sacred thread, a rosary or a garland on his chest, a deer-skin wrapped around his upper body, and a broad loin-cloth around his hips.

Contrasted with this is his warrior-like signs that suited war veterans rather than pious hermits—viz. a battle-axe, quivers, a bow and arrows; broad shoulders and long arms.

Further, while great sages and hermits always have a calm and peaceful countenance, Parashuram's was one of anger and wrathfulness—viz. curved and knitted eyebrows, red angry eyes.]

चौ०. देखत भृगुपति बेषु कराला । उठे सकल भय बिकल भुआला ॥ १ ॥
पितु समेत कहि कहि निज नामा । लगे करन सब दंड प्रनामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhata bhr̥gupati bēṣu karālā. uṭhē sakala bhaya bikala bhu'ālā. 1.
pitu samēta kahi kahi nija nāmā. lagē karana saba daṇḍa pranāmā. 2.

As soon as the kings saw the fierce form of Bhrigupati (sage Parashuram, the lord of line of sages tracing their origin to Bhrigu), they were all terrified, and rose from their seats (to pay respect to him). (1)

They began to mention their own names along with that of their respective fathers, and then prostrated themselves before him (a mark of respect that was done mechanically more out of fear of incurring the sage's wrath than out of any genuine respect for him because all the kings knew his reputation that he is inherently inimical to their race and finds pleasure in punishing members of the warrior Kshatriya race for the flimsiest of reasons). (2)

[Note—Just a few moments ago the kings had been on their feet, shouting and gesticulating wildly, seeking revenge for being humiliated—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 266 above. And now it is said that “they rose from their seats as soon as they saw sage Parashuram, and introduced themselves by telling their own names as well as those of their fathers before prostrating themselves in front of the angry sage.

It clearly means that as soon as they saw the angry sage rush in through the gate of the arena, they stopped shouting and boasting and immediately sat down so that they do not invite the attention of the wrathful sage. Pin-drop silence descended upon the arena as if by magic. No king or prince wanted to be caught red-handed, shouting and boasting, by the sage, because if the sage saw any one of them standing and shouting then it was sure that he would immediately vent his ire on that individual by chopping-off his head even before anyone could blink an eye.

Now, after entering the arena, the excited and angry sage was looking here and there to find out who was the culprit who broke the bow, and as he walked down the row of kings he stared down their faces. The person who faced the sage as he walked down the arena must have been shivering and sweating under his clothes out of fear for dear life. So, before the sage could become annoyed at them for not saying who they were, they began introducing themselves by uttering their names and those of their fathers, and then falling at the sage's feet to please him and keep him appeased and in good humour.

All of them fell before the sage one after another in quick succession. If they had not done so, they feared that the sage would treat it as sign of arrogance and haughtiness, and taking this sign as an affront to his authority he would have immediately chopped-off their heads.

When one prostrates before another person, he not only shows respect to the second person but also implies that he is surrendering before him and intends no confrontation. One is always unarmed while prostrating on the ground.

We can visualise this hilarious scene: As soon as the sage moved on to the next king, not bothering about the one who had just a moment ago fell down and prostrated on the ground before him, the first fellow rose up terrified, expecting the axe of the sage swinging towards him to cut off his head, and seeing that the sage has moved ahead to the next fellow and has spared him, he must have profusely thanked his stars and gods for still being alive! Then, after heaving a sigh of relief, this coward king must have wiped the sweat off his brow and sat down to see which fellow faces the sage's wrath.]

जेहि सुभायँ चितवहिं हितु जानी । सो जानइ जनु आइ खुटानी ॥ ३ ॥

jēhi subhāyam' citavahim hitu jānī. sō jāna'i janu ā'i khuṭānī. 3.

Even when the sage glanced at any of the kings casually in a normal friendly manner, that individual was so terrified that he thought that the span of his life has come to an end— i.e. the sage has selected him to vent his anger (otherwise why is he looking at him, why has he not moved ahead). (3)

[Note—We have read above in verse no. 2 that each of the kings told the sage his own name as well as that of his father. Sage Parashuram knew all the great kings and their family dynasties. So when he heard the names of each of these kings and the names of their fathers, he would stop now and then before any one of them if he happened to belong to some great dynasty to wish that particular king and ask for the welfare of his family. But the sage had such a wild reputation of being angry, wrathful and vengeful that even though he spoke in a friendly manner, or just smiled and shook his head politely to a king whom he knew or had heard of, just to acknowledge the latter's respects, the concerned king lost his breath, fearing for his life!]

जनक बहोरि आइ सिरु नावा । सीय बोलाइ प्रनामु करावा ॥ ४ ॥

आसिष दीन्हि सखीं हरषानीं । निज समाज लै गई सयानीं ॥ ५ ॥

janaka bahōri ā'i siru nāvā. sīya bōlā'i pranāmu karāvā. 4.

āsiṣa dīnhi sakhīm haraṣānīm. nija samāja lai gā'i sayānīm. 5.

Then king Janak came forward and bowed his head before the sage. He called Sita and made her too bow before him¹. (4)

The sage (Parashuram) blessed her (Sita), and this made her friends happy. [Now there was no fear for her as well as her groom Lord Ram from the wrath of sage Parashuram.]²

After this, they (Sita's friends) escorted her back to the place where other women were waiting. (5)

[Note—¹Janak deemed it fit, necessary and obligatory, being the host of the event, to come forward voluntarily to welcome and pay his respects to sage Parashuram. Earlier also, when sage Vishwamitra had come to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, Janak had gone outside the city to pay his respects to the sage and welcome him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 215).

When a king learnt that a great sage has arrived, he would invariably go to receive him. When sage Vishwamitra had gone to Ayodhya to meet king Dasrath to ask the latter

to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him so they can protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons, the king had gone forward to meet the sage outside the palace gates—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 206 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 207.

²Then king Janak summoned his daughter and made her pay respects to sage Parashuram.

Again, this is a normal thing for a father to do. We have seen earlier that when sage Vishwamitra had gone to Ayodhya to ask king Dasrath to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him, the king had first paid his own respects to the sage and then called all his four sons (Lord Ram and his other three brothers) to pay their individual respects to the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 207.

Now obviously, when king Janak politely bowed before the sage and summoned his daughter to make her also bow before the sage, no matter how angry the sage might have been he had no other choice but to exercise restraint as it would have been absolutely unbecoming for a sage or a hermit of his stature not to bless an innocent girl and her elderly father when they are bowing before him and seeking his blessing.

Now, how would a sage bless someone paying his respects? The obvious rule-of-thumb response to such situations is to bless by saying “be happy; be blessed; may god keep you happy and prosperous; have a long life; let your wishes be fulfilled”, and so on and so forth.

Once a sage blesses someone, the recipient sort of acquires immunity against all things that would go against his interests that are covered by this blessing. For instance, if the sage blesses that ‘you will succeed in your life’, then none of the evil stars that would have otherwise ruined his life would be able to make him fail now.

A girl’s most cherished desire, especially when she is about to be married, is to seek a sage’s blessings and good omen for the welfare and well-being of her husband and herself, for a happy married life, for a bright and happy future together. An elderly sage would voluntarily, as a natural impulse, out of his inherent compassionate nature, and out of courtesy, always bless a girl for a happy married life and good fortunes for her husband. But certainly, he cannot at all curse her and her husband; that would be wrong for a great sage.

Hence, sage Parashuram blessed Sita that she will have a cheerful married life, and all happiness would be hers. As soon as the sage uttered these reassuring words, Sita’s friends felt very happy because the danger on Lord Ram was eliminated instantly, by default. This is because the blessing of the sage, in whatever words he may have actually used to bless Sita, would become null and void if Sita’s beloved groom, Lord Ram, comes to any harm. Sita can’t be expected to remain happy and joyful if her dear husband Lord Ram is harmed in any way by the sage’s anger for the Lord breaking the bow. And since the sage’s words can be in vain, Lord Ram’s safety was ensured. In other words, the sage had granted an indirect immunity to Lord Ram by blessing Sita!

The same logic applies to her father Janak. What more a father would want at a time when his daughter is on the brink of being married than for her and her groom’s welfare and well-being? Sage Parashuram has also blessed the king, and so this was another insurance for Lord Ram’s safety.

Further on we shall read herein below in verse nos. 6-7 that sage Parashuram has also blessed Lord Ram and Laxman directly in the presence of another great sage Vishwamitra. It is now certain that no harm can ever come to either Lord Ram or his brother Laxman through sage Parashuram at least, because he has himself blessed them.

That is why no matter how angry the sage was and how hard he had tried to hit either Lord Ram or his brother Laxman, his hands did not cooperate with him and refused to hit

at either of the two brothers. There are enough hints of this—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 275; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 276; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 278; (iv) Doha no. 279 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 281; and (vi) from Doha no. 283—to Doha no. 284.

Besides this, if sage Parashuram had harmed Lord Ram in any way, it would have directly gone against his blessing for Sita that she be happy in future, and if he had harmed Laxman then also it would go against his blessing because Lord Ram cannot be expected to remain happy with Laxman injured, and therefore Sita too can't be expected to be happy with this situation.]

बिस्वामित्रु मिले पुनि आई । पद सरोज मेले दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

रामु लखनु दसरथ के ढोटा । दीन्हि असीस देखि भल जोटा ॥ ७ ॥

रामहि चितइ रहे थकि लोचन । रूप अपार मार मद मोचन ॥ ८ ॥

bisvāmitru milē puni ā'ī. pada sarōja mēlē dō'u bhā'ī. 6.

rāmu lakhanu dasaratha kē ḍhōṭā. dīnhi asīsa dēkhi bhala jōṭā. 7.

rāmahi cita'i rahē thaki lōcana. rūpa apāra mārā mada mōcana. 8.

Then sage Vishwamitra came and met sage Parashuram, and made the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) together touch the lotus-like (holy) feet of the sage. (6)

He introduced them to sage Parashuram, saying—‘They are Ram and Laxman. They are sons of king Dasrath.’¹

Parashuram saw the charming pair of brothers and blessed them². (7)

When the sage's eyes fell upon Lord Ram—whose beautiful form was so astounding that it put to shame the pride of Kamdeo (cupid) that he has the most charming form in the world—he was completely swept off his feet, became spell-bound and so profoundly mesmerized by the Lord's matchless charm that his eyes could not move away from the Lord³. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman were still young princes. Their father, king Dasrath, was however a renowned king, and was therefore known to sage Parashuram. But obviously for practical reasons, the sage was not expected to know about every son of every king who ruled the earth. That is why each of the kings had introduced themselves to him by first telling their own names and then that of their father and dynasty—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269 herein above.

When sage Vishwamitra had met king Janak for the first time after arrival at Janakpur, at that time also he had introduced the two brothers to the king in the same way—telling their names and the name of their father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

²Till this moment sage Parashuram did not know who had actually broken the bow. This will be clear shortly when he enquires from king Janak about the reason for the festivities, and upon learning about the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow he demanded to know who had broken it. Refer: Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 270 that follow herein below.

This is the primary reason why he has not yet cursed anyone or had threatened anyone that he would kill him. On the contrary, he has blessed all who sought his blessings—e.g. Janak, Sita, Lord Ram and Laxman.

But Parashuram was caught unaware in his own trap: After blessing Sita and the two brothers he will discover that it was Lord Ram who has broken the bow, and to rub salt on his wounds he will face the scathing taunts and scorns of Laxman who will tease the sage no end, leaving him wringing his hands and fretting and fuming in anger—but, ironically, unable to do anything. Why? Well, after having blessed them, how can the sage now cause them any harm. His blessing itself stood as a shield that afforded protection to Laxman and Lord Ram against the sage's wrath. This entire episode is narrated below in Baal Kand, from Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

³The images of Lord Ram and Laxman were so mesmerizing, so captivating that they enthralled the mind and heart of anyone who looked at them. Every single place that we come across in the story of the Ramayan which describes the reaction of those who saw the two brothers, we observe this fact in a universal manner. More recently, we can cite the following examples:--

- (i) Janak was enthralled by this beautiful image when he first saw the two brothers while welcoming sage Vishwamitra (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216);
- (ii) then the citizens too were swept off their feet by this beautiful sight (refer: Baal Kand, from Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221);
- (iii) and of course Sita was deeply enchanted by them (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 234).

What's more, even the dispassionate sage Vishwamitra could not move his eyes away from the face of Lord Ram when he first saw him at Ayodhya when the sage had gone to bring the two brothers to his hermitage for protection of his fire sacrifice—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207.

Now, as it happened, after the two great sages Vishwamitra and Parashuram met each other and exchanged customary greetings, Lord Ram and Laxman were ordered by their guardian sage Vishwamitra to touch the feet of Parashuram. Till this moment sage Parashuram had no chance to closely see the charming images of the two brothers as his attention was diverted elsewhere. But when the two brothers stood up before him after paying their respects to the sage by touching his feet, it was the first time that Parashuram saw them from so close quarters. And as was expected, he was enthralled.]

दो०. बहुरि बिलोकि बिदेह सन कहहु काह अति भीर।
पूछत जानि अजान जिमि व्यापेउ कोपु सरीर ॥ २६९ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri bilōki bidēha sana kahahu kāha ati bhīra.
pūchata jāni ajāna jimi byāpē'u kōpu sarīra. 269.

Now, inspite of being aware of everything, sage Parashuram feigned ignorance and asked Janak—‘Well, tell me, why is there such a huge crowd here?’

Though he pretended to be ignorant of the reason for this huge assembly, he was seething with anger internally so much so that his whole body was virtually soaked in anger and a desire for revenge. (Doha no. 269)

[Note—Sage Parashuram asked Janak and nobody else because Janak was the ruler of the place, its king, and therefore acted as the host of the ceremony. The kings and other

people had gathered here at his invitation. So he is the proper person to answer this question.

The sage already knew that Shiva's bow has been broken—this was the reason why he had come here to the venue in the first place. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268. But he wanted to punish Janak along with the person who broke the bow, and so used this ploy of ignorance to let Janak say himself that this gathering had been called for breaking the bow, at which the angry sage will get an excuse to punish him. This is clear when he threatened Janak that he will upturn the earth within the periphery of his kingdom, meaning he would cause widespread destruction in his kingdom and bury everything underground like it happens during an earthquake—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 270 herein below.

From the corner of his eyes perhaps he had seen the broken bow lying on the ground, and this sight had fired his anger so much that his whole body seemed to be soaked in it.]

चौ०. समाचार कहि जनक सुनाए । जेहि कारन महीप सब आए ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

samācāra kahi janaka sunā'ē. jēhi kārana mahīpa saba ā'ē. 1.

Janak told him (sage Parashuram) the whole story in detail as to why all the kings had come there. (1)

[Note—The reason has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

सुनत बचन फिरि अनत निहारे । देखे चापखंड महि डारे ॥ २ ॥
अति रिस बोले बचन कठोरा । कहु जड़ जनक धनुष कै तोरा ॥ ३ ॥
बेगि देखाउ मूढ़ न त आजू । उलटउँ महि जहँ लहि तव राजू ॥ ४ ॥

sunata bacana phiri anata nihārē. dēkhē cāpakhaṇḍa mahi ḍārē. 2.
ati risa bōlē bacana kaṭhōrā. kahu jaṛa janaka dhanuṣa kai tōrā. 3.
bēgi dēkhā'u mūṛha na ta ājū. ulaṭa'um' mahi jaham' lahi tava rājū. 4.

Hearing this, the sage turned his eyes towards that direction where the pieces of the broken bow were lying on the ground.¹ (2)

The sight of the broken bow lying unceremoniously on the ground infuriated him beyond measure, and losing all inhibitions and control over himself he sternly asked king Janak in an extremely harsh and threatening voice—‘Oh you stupid fellow Janak, tell me who has broken the bow. (3)

Be quick to answer me, you fool, and show me that fellow who has done it (and who had the temerity to break Lord Shiva's bow). If you don't do it, I will turn the earth

upside down as far as your kingdom stretches (i.e. I will reduce your kingdom to rubble and bury everything underground).'² (4)

[Note—¹The sage was fully aware that the bow had already been broken as he had heard the loud thunder caused when it had snapped into two—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268.

The bow was central to the whole ceremony, and therefore was placed prominently on a central platform of the circular arena. The seats of invited kings and other guests were arranged in a circle around this platform. The king hosting the event, king Janak, and the chief guest of the event, sage Vishwamitra, were seated on an elevated area in one prominent corner of the arena that was so strategically located that the entire venue could be seen from there. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 224.

The bow was not a small one; it had huge unconventional dimensions because it had belonged to Lord Shiva and was used by him to kill the demon Tripurasur. So its broken parts were visible from all parts of the arena.

Remember: We have read a little earlier that Parashuram had 'pretended' that he does not know why this assembly has gathered—refer: Doha no. 269 above. We have also read that his eyes were red with anger and his general countenance showed that he was restless with anger and vengeance—refer: (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 268; and (ii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 269, along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it.

In short, Parashuram had already seen the bow lying broken on the ground, but was waiting for Janak to tell him the story of its breaking. Sage Parashuram had the intention of punishing Janak in public for being the cause of something that was otherwise deemed unimaginable—which was 'to cause an indirect insult to Lord Shiva by getting the Lord's bow broken at his behest'.

²Janak has been dubbed as a "fool and stupid fellow" by the angry sage Parashuram who used these epithets to mean that Janak should have used this bow to worship Lord Shiva through its medium, as a symbol of Shiva or a treasured gift by the Lord, but instead he has got it broken. What can be more idiotic and nonsensical behaviour?

Sage Parashuram has threatened to "upturn the earth as far as the kingdom of Janakpur stretched". Well, Parashuram knew that Janak was a compassionate king who loved his subjects more than anything else. When he is threatened with the prospect of ruining his kingdom and causing unprecedented horrors for his subjects, then the chances are better that he will divulge the name of the person who has broken the bow.

We must note here that though Parashuram knew about the breaking of the bow even before he arrived at the venue, he did not know who had actually broken it. He did not guess that this person was Lord Ram till the moment the Lord himself stepped forward to tell him so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 271 which we shall read below shortly.

We observe that Janak has had to face great humiliation in full public view for his decision of getting the bow of Lord Shiva broken. The 'first occasion' was Laxman's humiliating verbal tirad against him (refer—Baal Kand, from Doha no. 252—to Doha no. 253; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254), the 'second occasion' was the kings threatening to defeat him in battle and snatch his daughter right under his nose (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266), and the 'third occasion' is now with sage Parashuram calling him names, viz. 'a stupid', 'a fool', and threatening to destroy his kingdom and lay it to ruin in the present verses.

Why was this so? The answer is very interesting. Let us see how.

When we come to think of it and scrutinize the events, we observe that Janak had indeed acted impertinently and irresponsibly by being instrumental in getting Lord Shiva's bow broken in public, thereby causing an indirect insult of Lord Shiva.

Remember: This bow was kept by Lord Shiva with his ancestors for safe-keeping because the Lord trusted them. The Lord had not told the custodian king to get rid of it or dispose of it as he wills either at that time or in any time in future. What right did one of their descendants, Janak, have to get it broken? Obviously the answer is 'none'.

Then there were other problems too. Breaking anything kept by someone for safe-keeping without that person's express permission is equivalent to showing utter contempt and disrespect to that person to whom the thing originally belongs. In this case the bow belonged to Shiva, and Janak's family was a mere custodian. Therefore, Janak had no moral right to show disrespect to it and its rightful owner Lord Shiva by getting it broken.

Since this bow had once been held by Lord Shiva, it deserved reverence and respect like any other thing or symbol associated with the Lord. Getting it broken so contemptuously was nothing short of an insult of Shiva.

Now let us see what punishment Janak got for this sin. This is very interesting. He got repaid with the same coin that he had used to imply disrespect for Shiva. He was scolded, scorned at, rebuked, bitterly threatened and humiliated in full public view, in an over-packed assembly attended by his own subjects as well as by all the worthwhile kings and princes of the time, along with their retinues, in front of his own daughter, ministers, courtiers, priest etc.—not once, not twice, but 'thrice', for his misdeed.

It definitely goes to the credit of Janak that he bore with this public humiliation quietly without showing any anger, perhaps because he, being a highly wise, righteous and judicious king, realized that this was a punishment for his sin of getting Shiva's bow broken. He must have regretted his decision; he must have wondered that he should have thought of it before it was too late, that he could have devised some other means of finding a suitable groom for his daughter instead of making the bow a condition as it is now proving a thorn on his back.

But was this public humiliation enough of a punishment for Janak for getting Lord Shiva's bow broken? Yes, it was. Being ridiculed, scorned at, strongly censured, facing abuses, angry reprimands and admonishments, with a lowered head and not being able to answer back to defend one's self, one's honour and actions, or unable to seek retribution, is worse than actual physical death. For an honourable man of self-respect, an upright man of dignity and stature, nothing can be worse. Janak was not an ordinary man of humble means; he was a great king.

He definitely felt like burying himself in the ground, out of shame and humiliation, if it split open, after being subjected to such unimaginable ignominious treatment thrice in front of his own subjects and family members, in the midst of the society of kings and princes and other invited dignitaries. Death is far better than to live in this world after having been subjected to this great public insult—this is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as well. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 63. The context here is this: Sati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, had gone to attend the fire sacrifice of her father, Prajapati Daksha. He harboured some old grudge against Shiva, and therefore had neither invited the Lord to attend the fire sacrifice nor had kept any offering for him though offerings were made to all other gods as is the practice during such sacrifices. Sati regarded this as a public insult of her husband, Lord Shiva, and declared "all past sorrows and wounds of my heart caused by previous insults and humiliation have faded in comparison to this present one which is intolerable for me; though there are countless forms of sorrows and grief in this world, the worst is an insult and humiliation in front of the society to which one belongs". Here she meant that her father has publicly insulted and shown contempt for her husband, Lord Shiva, by not inviting him to the sacrifice, or giving him his due share of the offerings made to the sacred fire while all other gods, even those who are very junior to Shiva, have been invited, shown due respect and offered their share. The invited gods were looking at Sati with smirks and wicked smiles

on their faces, sneering at her for being there even when she knew that her dear husband would be insulted. Why did she come to the fire sacrifice of her father when she knew that Shiva has not been invited; is she so eager to join in the celebrations that she preferred to disregard the value of her husband's prestige and self-respect? This showed her in very bad light as for any honourable woman her husband occupies the highest place in her life.

So, Sati decided to burn herself and die instantly rather than live all her life with this shame and the memory of the public humiliation that she has had to face. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64. The idea is that the way Janak was insulted and humiliated thrice, as enumerated above in this discussion, it was the worst kind of punishment that he could have got. It would have been better if he was killed in action in a battle than having to live all his life with this history dogging him.]

अति डरु उतरु देत नृपु नाहीं । कुटिल भूप हरषे मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

ati ḍaru utaru dēta nṛpu nāhīm. kuṭila bhūpa haraṣē mana māhīm. 5.

The king (Janak) was so terrified that he could not answer the sage. The wicked kings, meanwhile, felt very happy (as they now felt that the angry sage would do what they had themselves hoped to do—i.e. punish king Janak as well as Lord Ram). (5)

[Note—Janak was struck with fear as he knew about the sage's reputation. He knew that Parashuram was not merely boasting; he will indeed cause unprecedented havoc in his kingdom now that the bow has been broken and this fact cannot be hidden. His fear was compounded because it was he who had been the cause of its breaking. He was terrified because what was expected to be an occasion for celebration will turn out to be an occasion for grieving and mourning.

The wicked kings, as expected, rejoiced. What more could they want. They had wanted to disrupt the marriage ceremony somehow, even by an armed conflict—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266 above. Now they were happy that sage Parashuram would do it for them; they were rather grateful to him for fulfilling their desire without giving them any trouble or any bad name.]

सुर मुनि नाग नगर नर नारी । सोचहिं सकल त्रास उर भारी ॥ ६ ॥

surā muni nāga nagara nara nārī. sōcahīm sakala trāsa ura bhārī. 6.

On the other hand, the gods, the sages, the Naagas (the serpents; the subterranean creatures), and the citizens of the city, men and women alike, became very worried and extremely anxious in their hearts (because none of them knew what would happen now as almost all had heard about the unforgiving and uncompromising nature of sage Parashuram). (6)

[Note—The entities mentioned here represent all the living beings in this world. The gods represent the inhabitants of the heaven such as holy spirits etc., the serpents represented the subterranean creatures, and the terrestrial creatures were represented by the sages and the citizens, the former symbolizing learned men and the latter the ordinary human beings.

Earlier, when the bow was broken and there was celebration, they had rejoiced; they had played musical instruments, sang and danced. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263.]

मन पछिताति सीय महतारी । बिधि अब सँवरी बात बिगारी ॥ ७ ॥

mana pachitāti sīya mahatārī. bidhi aba sam̐varī bāta bigārī. 7.

Sita's mother (queen Sunayana) regretted and lamented in her heart about the developments. She became pensive and very remorseful that at a time when things appeared to be getting right, the malignant Creator ("Bidhi") threw a spanner in the wheel and ruined everything. (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256. When Lord Ram had stood up to break the bow on the orders of sage Vishwamitra, the queen mother had worried at that time also.

When he had broken the bow, she had felt elated. Refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Now, all of a sudden, this horrifying prospect of ruin and being at the receiving end of a sage's anger has erupted out of nowhere and most unexpectedly.

These quick developments were like a roller-coaster emotional ride for the queen-mother. She was swung from the extreme of joy when Lord Ram broke the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on the Lord's body to the pit of grief and sadness when first the failed kings threatened battle and then this furious sage, who was well-known for his killing sprees while in anger, has now come with his battle axe drawn to strike-off the head of the culprit who broke the bow. Oh Creator, she prayed, what do you want?]

भृगुपति कर सुभाउ सुनि सीता । अरध निमेष कलप सम बीता ॥ ८ ॥

bhṛgupati kara subhā'u suni sītā. aradha nimēṣa kalapa sama bītā. 8.

When Sita heard of the sage's temperament and reputation (from her friends), she was so emotionally upset that each passing moment appeared to be as long and stretched as a full era of time. (8)

[Note—In other words, Sita became very impatient; time became unbearable for her, it seemed to stop. She did not want to contemplate about the next moment because god only knew what would happen then. She feared the worst.

What was the thing about sage Parashuram's nature that made her so nervous when her friends told her about it? Well, we don't have to go far to seek the answer; it is provided by the sage himself while venting his anger on Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 274; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 275; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 281; and (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

Sita was very sad and felt hopeless, hapless and helpless. When things began to look bright for her, there is this sudden prospect of gloom and overriding grief. To use a metaphor, when the sun broke through the gloomy darkness of the night to shine bright

and give the world the light of hope and happiness, it was suddenly being overcome by the solar eclipse, causing darkness and gloom to descend once again on the world!

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 267 which says that both the queen and Sita were worried when they saw that the wicked kings had risen in revolt and there was an imminent danger of war.]

दो०. सभय बिलोके लोग सब जानि जानकी भीरु ।

हृदयँ न हरषु बिषादु कछु बोले श्रीरघुबीरु ॥ २७० ॥

dōhā.

sabhaya bilōkē lōga saba jāni jānakī bhīru.

hṛdayam' na haraṣu biṣādu kachu bōlē śrīraghubīru. 270.

When Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu dynasty) saw that all the people as well as Janki (Sita) were afraid, he spoke (to answer sage Parashuram) without feeling either happy or remorseful in his heart. (Doha no. 270)

[Note—Lord Ram is very merciful and compassionate. He is the Lord and protector of the world; he is its guardian and supreme care-taker. So when he saw that everyone is terrified and Janak has become tongue-tied, the Lord decided to intervene and spare them any further embarrassment.

Lord Ram has a natural temperament of being neutral and dispassionate; he exhibits an exemplary sense of equanimity in all situations, favourable or unfavourable. Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech, has acknowledged this in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Earlier in this episode, when sage Vishwamitra had ordered Lord Ram to get up and break the bow to remove the cause of Janak's immense sorrows, the Lord had got up from his seat and moved towards the bow with the same nonchalance, the same indifference and neutrality that he shows now while speaking to sage Parashuram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254.

Since he was the one who had broken the bow, the Lord decided that it was his responsibility to face the consequences, whatever they might be. Why should he let others suffer? King Janak had already suffered so much, so it would not be proper to force him to undergo any more rounds of sufferings and humiliations.]

चौ०. नाथ संभुधनु भंजनिहारा । होइहि केउ एक दास तुझारा ॥ १ ॥

आयसु काह कहिअ किन मोही । सुनि रिसाइ बोले मुनि कोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nātha sambhudhanu bhanjanihārā. hō'ihī kē'u ēka dāsa tumhārā. 1.

āyasu kāha kahi'a kina mōhī. suni risā'i bōlē muni kōhī. 2.

[Lord Ram spoke very politely to sage Parashuram—]

‘Oh Lord! The person who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva must be (literally) one of your servants. [That is, this person is surely junior to you, because you are such a great sage that no one can be greater than you. And being your servant or subordinate, he surely had no intention at all of insulting you or injuring your ego.] (1)

Why don’t you tell me what you command is, or what you wish? [That is, why don’t you tell me what is that you want, now that the bow is broken already?]¹

Hearing these words of Lord Ram, the sage replied angrily—(2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has carefully worded his enquiry. What he said in verse no. 1 was intended to soothe the ruffled ego of the haughty sage. The message that was conveyed was crystal clear—“It is me, Ram, who has broken the bow, but oh sage, do not become unnecessarily angry as I had no intention of either insulting you or Lord Shiva, and neither do I want to give an impression that I have any intention of insubordinating you. You are a great sage, while I am merely a prince. I don’t deny that I have broken the bow, but you being so senior a person, you must exhibit maturity and poise. The bow is already broken, and so getting angry and shouting won’t help. Let us be practical and discuss wisely what remedy can be found for something that has already happened. What do you want from me?”]

This statement of Lord Ram shows that inspite of breaking the formidable bow of Lord Shiva that had defied the combined might of the mightiest of kings of the earth, the Lord had no trace of ego or pride in him. This is clear by the term “Daas” in the text—which literally means a ‘servant’. Here the term does not actually mean a menial servant who does household chores for his lord or master, but it means someone who is very humble and junior to the person addressed.

The sage was not a child; the Lord’s reply hinted to him that he is the one who has broken the bow. This is because the sage had asked king Janak about who had broken the bow, and it was Janak who should have replied. Why would or why should someone else, a third person who is not involved in the incident at all, must unnecessarily interfere when he is not being asked anything? This clearly hinted to the sage that it was Lord Ram who had broken the bow, or at least directly involved in its breaking, or someone else who had Lord Ram’s support had broken it on the Lord’s orders, thereby necessitating intervention by the Lord.

Since Lord Ram spoke in the third person, i.e. said “it must be someone who is your servant” instead of directly accepting responsibility, the reply of the sage matched it: he also referred to that ‘third person’ who had broken the bow—refer: verse nos. 3-5 herein below.]

सेवकु सो जो करै सेवकाई । अरि करनी करि करिअ लराई ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनहु राम जेहिं सिवधनु तोरा । सहसबाहु सम सो रिपु मोरा ॥ ४ ॥
 सो बिलगाउ बिहाइ समाजा । न त मारे जैहहिं सब राजा ॥ ५ ॥

sēvaku sō jō karai sēvakā’ī. ari karanī kari kari’a larā’ī. 3.
 sunahu rāma jēhiṁ sivadhanu tōrā. sahasabāhu sama sō ripu mōrā. 4.
 sō bilagā’u bihā’i samājā. na ta mārē jaihaṁ saba rājā. 5.

[The sage replied to Lord Ram angrily—]

‘A servant is one who serves with humility, and not one who acts like an enemy by doing something that annoys his lord. (3)

Listen Ram, anyone who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva is like the thousand-handed enemy for me. [Or, such a person is equivalent to ‘Sahastra-baahu’¹ as far as I am concerned. He had killed my father, and to punish him I had cut-off his thousand arms and killed him. Likewise I will chop-off the hands of the person who has broken this bow before killing him.] (2)

Let him step forward and separate himself from the rest of the kings, for otherwise I will kill all of them.’ (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The story of ‘Sahastra-baahu’, also known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’ is narrated in a detailed note on sage Parashuram that is appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268 above.

Now, Lord Shiva was sage Parashuram’s revered deity and his Guru, a moral preceptor, as Shiva is regarded as the universal Guru of all hermits and ascetics. Insulting a Guru is equivalent to insulting one’s parent, especially one’s father. Parashuram is referring to it. He means that since Shiva is as revered by him as his father sage Jamdagni, anyone who has dared to insult Shiva by breaking his bow is deemed to be Parashuram’s enemy just like Sahastrabaahu who had insulted his father Jamdagni. Therefore, just like he had killed Sahastrabaahu, he would also kill the person who has broken the bow.

It’s better for this fellow to step out, because otherwise all the kings would be punished for shielding him and taking side with him.

An interesting thing should be mentioned here in the passing. We have read earlier, while reading the note on sage Parashuram in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268, that he had vowed to kill the Kshatriya kings for “twenty-one times”. This limit had been crossed before this incident of the bow breaking ceremony had taken place. Perhaps the sage had not kept any count of the number of times he had already eliminated the kings, for if he had done so he wouldn’t have threatened to kill anyone beyond this limit.

As it eventually turned out, no matter how hard the sage had tried to hit Laxman when the latter was speaking to him in very scorching tones, his hands won’t move and refused to cooperate with him. In fact, Parashuram was himself astonished why he was not able to punish Laxman, and why his hands refused to cooperate with him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280.]

सुनि मुनि बचन लखन मुसुकाने । बोले परसुधरहि अपमाने ॥ ६ ॥

sunī muni bacana lakhana musukānē. bōlē parasudharahi apamānē. 6.

[Laxman was restive. He just could not cope with someone talking angrily with his beloved brother and Lord, Sri Ram. Unable to resist his urge to intervene on behalf of Lord Ram, Laxman spoke sweetly with a smile, but his demeanours were so aggressive and his manner of speaking so taunting and overtly insulting that his words and smile added fuel to the fire of the anger of the sage instead of calming him down.]

Hearing the words of the sage, Laxman smiled sarcastically and spoke in a way that was deemed to be insulting by Parashuram*—(6)

[Note—The sage was already angry, and first Lord Ram had spoken to him out of turn because the sage had demanded to know who had broken the bow from king Janak and

not from Ram, and now another prince has started speaking out of turn, without being asked anything. This truly annoyed the sage because he thought that these two brothers are taking him lightly and making a fun, a mockery of him.

Parashuram wondered angrily, ‘Why are these two fellows chirping out of turn? Do they think that I have come here to joke with them? The situation is very grave, my revered Lord Shiva has been broken, and instead of expressing any remorse or regret, this fellow Laxman is ‘smiling sarcastically’ at me as if the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow is of no importance. Well, this is intolerable for me.’

Indeed the sage was extremely exasperated and infuriated because whereas other powerful kings and princes had developed pale faces out of fear of the sage, and were perhaps searching for a way to sneak out to avoid the wrath of the sage’s anger, here were two young princes talking boldly and fearlessly with him as if the issue was something of a joke. The sage was excessively annoyed at Laxman’s light-hearted treatment of this issue which the sage regarded as very grave.

The question arises, ‘why did Laxman choose to act in a way that would be insulting for the sage?’ Well, for one, a sage is supposed to be a calm and peaceful person who is forgiving by nature, and not one who spits fire and brimstone, who is full of spite and haughtiness, and who is ready to kill others at the drop of a hat. In other words, if a person who calls himself a ‘sage’ does not show virtues that are characteristic of such exalted souls then he is worthy of contempt. The second reason is that the sage had threatened to kill anyone who had broken the bow, and since this person happened to be Lord Ram whom Laxman revered highly, any hint that the Lord is being insulted ignited Laxman’s wrath. In a way, Laxman warns sage Parashuram to behave himself as he has at last met his match.

Further, the sage was very proud of his martial prowess and his ability to subdue the mightiest of kings. This character was not good for the spiritual welfare of the sage because pride, haughtiness and arrogance as well as anger and vengeance are negative characters that are never expected from a great sage and hermit; these negative traits pull down a sage from his exalted stature instead of elevating him. The sage was dressed like a hermit but behaved like an ordinary worldly man who is soaked in negative qualities. Hence, he was fit for contempt. The lesson that we draw from this episode is that no matter how learned a person is or how highly placed in society he may be, if he has negative qualities in him, such as anger, pride, haughtiness and vengefulness, then one day or the other he is bound to be insulted and put to shame.

*Why did Parashuram regard Laxman’s smile and words as being ‘deemed to be insulting for him’? Refer verse nos. 7-8 that follow below and their accompanying note.]

बहु धनुहीं तोरीं लरिकाई । कबहुँ न असि रिस कीन्हि गोसाईं ॥ ७ ॥

एहि धनु पर ममता केहि हेतू । सुनि रिसाइ कह भृगुकुलकेतू ॥ ८ ॥

bahu dhanuhīm tōrīm larikā’īm. kabahum’ na asi risa kīnhi gōsā’īm. 7.
ēhi dhanu para mamatā kēhi hētū. suni risā’i kaha bhr̥gukulakētū. 8.

Laxman said to sage Prashuram—‘As a child I had broken many bows, but my lord you had never shown such anger at that time. (7)

What is so special with this particular bow that you love it so much (that its breaking has annoyed you extremely to the extent as to have brought you down puffing and fuming to this place from your hermitage, causing you to disrupt your spiritual pursuit

and meditation, and get so much upset and angry)? [I don't see anything special with this bow; it looks to me as an old, rusty and wornout bow that is of no use whatever in practice, and therefore there should be no cause to become so fretful and agitated at its breaking. I don't think it is of any precious value or importance to invite such reaction from a sage of your repute and status. Come on sage, what's so wrong with its breaking that you are so furious and mad about?]

Hearing these words of Laxman, sage Parashuram (“bhr̥gukulakētū”; literally ‘the flag-bearer of the greatness of the line of sages coming down from sage Bhrigu’) became very angry and peeved. He said in fury—(8)

[Note—Why did the sage become angry? Well, this bow belonged to Lord Shiva whom sage Parashuram regarded as his Guru (moral preceptor and revered teacher) as well as the deity whom he worshipped. Treating a bow that belonged to the sage's respected Guru and revered deity (Shiva) as being equal to other ordinary insignificant bows that children play and break umpteen numbers of time in a routine manner was deemed by sage Parashuram to be an extreme form of insubordination of Shiva, and since an insult caused to one's Guru and deity is to be regarded as one's personal insult, the sage took strong objection at Laxman's behaviour.

Laxman's question offended the sage who took his smile (Chaupai line no. 6 above), and his carefree attitude as if nothing wrong has happened (Chaupai line no. 7), as an affront to his dignity, self-respect and exalted stature.]

दो०. रे नृप बालक काल बस बोलत तोहि न सँभार ।
धनुही सम तिपुरारि धनु बिदित सकल संसार ॥ २७१ ॥

dōhā.

rē nr̥pa bālaka kāla basa bōlata tōhi na sam̐bhāra.
dhanuhī sama tipurāri dhanu bidita sakala sansāra. 271.

[Sage Parashuram was very peeved and so he scolded Laxman, chiding him for his impertinence and denigrating Lord Shiva by comparing the Lord's bow worthy of respect and worship with an ordinary bow that children often break in their childhood while casually playing with it.]

The angry sage said to Laxman—‘Oh you young prince (“nr̥pa bālaka”; ‘nr̥pa’ = a king; ‘bālaka’ = a young boy)! (It appears that—) You are in the grip of death (or are under the spell of the death-god; “kāla basa”), and so you have no control over your words and speak without thinking of what you are saying, not understanding the gravity of your utterances (“bōlata tōhi na sam̐bhāra”).

How dare you compare the world-famous bow of Lord Shiva, the great Lord who is known as “Tripurari” (because he had used this bow to conquer the three formidable legendary cities and kill their ruler, the demon ‘Tripura’), with an ordinary, humble bow (when you say that you had broken many bows as a child and there was no hue and cry at that time). How dare you say so?’ (Doha no. 271)

[Note—The sage has used the words “Nrip-Baalak”, literally meaning a young son of a king, while addressing Laxman, and the word “Tripurari” for Lord Shiva. What the sage

means is clear. He chides Laxman that the latter talks like an ignorant and immature boy ('Baalak') who seems to be unaware of the great events of this world, for otherwise did he not know that this bow was used by Lord Shiva to kill the formidable demon by the name of Tripura ('Tripurari') whom none of the other Gods, including Vishnu, could face. Besides this, the bow belonged to Shiva who is also known and revered as the 'Maha-Deva', the Great God of creation. Therefore it is absolutely irrational and highly stupid to compare such a mighty bow with an ordinary bow that children break while playing, as Laxman thinks it is—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes the current Doha no. 271.

The greatness and uniqueness of the bow was declared by king Janak's heralds as well as by king Janak himself—refer: Baal Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 250; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 252. So, how idiotic it is for Laxman to compare this formidable, world-renowned bow of Lord Shiva with ordinary bows that he (Laxman) may have broken as a child?

Only those people whose minds begin to hallucinate when they are under the spell of death talk irrationally and nonsense things. The sage sternly warns Laxman to mind his words and be careful with what he says because death is staring in his face, and if he (Laxman) tries to act too smart with the sage then let him be warned that he will be responsible for the consequences which would be fatal for him.

When Parashuram referred to 'death' while admonishing Laxman, he meant that hadn't Laxman paid attention to what the sage had said just a few moments ago—that he is determined to severely punish the person who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva, and when he punishes someone it means 'death'. Refer—Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 270; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 271.

The fact that the sage had no reservations about killing a person as a means of punishment is clearly declared by the sage himself a little later during this episode. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

It is said that when one is destined to die, when death is inevitable, when death looms over a person, his rational thinking, intellect and wisdom abandon him, and he is propelled to death by becoming reckless, 'by losing control over what he says', what actions he takes and how he behaves. He is attracted to death like the insect is to the wick of a lighted lamp or a raging fire, only to get burnt to death.

This particular sign that 'one begins to talk incoherently and madly when one is in the jaws of death' as implied by sage Parashuram here when he admonishes Laxman has another parallel in this book 'Ram Charit Manas' when Angad says the same thing to Ravana in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33. In this case, Angad was sent as an emissary by Lord Ram to Ravana in a final attempt to avoid the ruinous war. Angad tried every logic he could think of in an attempt to persuade Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid the calamitous war, but the demon king won't listen. Instead, Ravana started boasting and denigrating the Lord. So Angad chides Ravana by saying that the latter's death seems to be imminent because he won't listen to any sane advice and 'was babbling incoherently as if in a delirium because death seems to have got hold of him (by deluding and eclipsing his intellect, his sense of rational thinking and his wisdom)'.

A very interesting development has occurred here in a subtle manner. While Parashuram admonishes Laxman that the latter seems to be in the throes of death because he is talking nonsense, the sage himself, in his fit of anger, had been talking nonsense, without giving thought to what he is saying. Why is it so? Well, the sage has repeatedly stressed that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva. So why did he not ponder over the fact that since it is not a joke to break Lord Shiva's bow, then obviously if someone had indeed

broken it then that person must be at least equivalent to Lord Shiva if not greater than him! Besides this logic, how could anyone ever break Lord Shiva's bow without the Lord's consent. In other words, anyone who had broken the bow must have had Shiva's approval and backing.

Therefore, would sage Parashuram not commit a grave and unpardonable sin by going against the wishes of Lord Shiva himself because it was impossible to break the bow without the Lord's consent. This sin would be aggravated by harming that person who has broken the bow, obviously with Shiva's consent—the person surely had the backing of Lord Shiva simply because had Shiva not wanted the bow to be broken then no power on earth would have been able to move it, let alone break it. This is evident when none of the mighty kings could move the bow even a fraction of an inch—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 252.

So the sage had gravely erred in this case by threatening to kill the person who had broken the bow because he had neglected the fact that the bow cannot be broken without the consent of Lord Shiva. Therefore, while trying to act unilaterally in a self-righteous manner and pretending that he has the mandate to uphold the dignity of Lord Shiva by punishing any person who does anything that is purportedly insulting to the Lord, in the present case by breaking the Lord's bow, the sage had unwittingly invited ridicule and humiliation upon himself at the hands of Laxman.

The lesson we draw from Parashuram's episode is that 'anger is one's worst enemy'. It is anger that makes one lose sense of what he must say and do, anger is actually the element that makes a man lose his bearings and throws him virtually into the jaws of death because his intellect and wisdom abandon him, and it is anger that forces a man to make a clown of himself in the society.

By being angry, Parashuram had made a mockery of his own greatness and exalted stature, of his immense strength and powers that he had acquired by doing severe Tapa (penances) so much so that instead of seeking retribution for breaking of Shiva's bow he had only invited ridicule upon himself.]

चौ०. लखन कहा हँसि हमरें जाना । सुनहु देव सब धनुष समाना ॥ १ ॥
का छति लाभु जून धनु तोरें । देखा राम नयन के भोरें ॥ २ ॥
छुअत टूट रघुपतिहु न दोसू । मुनि बिनु काज करिअ कत रोसू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

lakhana kahā haṁsi hamarēm jānā. sunahu dēva saba dhanuṣa samānā. 1.
kā chati lābhu jūna dhanu tōrēm. dēkhā rāma nayana kē bhōrēm. 2.
chu'ata ṭūṭa raghupatihu na dōsū. muni binu kāja kari'a kata rōsū. 3.

Laxman smiled wryly and retorted—'Oh respected Lord ("dēva")! In my opinion all the bows are alike. (1)

What is lost or what harm is done, and likewise what gain is made or honoured acquired by breaking an already worn-out, old, rusty and decrepit bow? So, why would Lord Ram break the bow intentionally?

The matter of fact is that when Lord Ram saw it, he just wanted to examine it closely by turning it sideways on its stand and lifting it in his hands, and he had no intention whatsoever to break it. (2)

But unfortunately this bow crumbled as soon as Raghupati (the Lord of the Raghu dynasty) touched it (because it was extremely fragile and highly rusted due to its old age and long storage without use, resulting in its losing its tensile strength and substance). [That is, the fact that the bow broke during its examination by Lord Ram was no fault of the Lord for the bow was already fragile and past its life span, and it simply gave in when turned on its side as is the wont of old and worn-out things that have remained untouched and uncared for a long time and had outlived their life span. No one gets fame by breaking old things, and so why would Lord Ram try such a stupid thing as to expect getting fame by breaking an old and rusty bow? Actually it would give him a bad name that he caused harm to an antiquity; and no one would like to be ticked off for this act.]

Oh sage, say then, what is the fault of Lord Ram, and therefore you are unnecessarily getting angry and worked-up for no reason or rhyme. [You must be realistic and try to understand the position. Lord Ram had no intention of either showing disrespect to Lord Shiva or the bow; perish such thoughts if you have any. And neither did the Lord wish to break the bow and attempt to get any fame for doing so as no one honours a person for breaking old things; rather it only invites scorn and infamy. So, oh wise and learned sage, think over the matter with a cool head and overcome your anger which is misplaced and out of proportion to the actual event. You know sage: by behaving the way you are behaving, it is not Lord Ram who gets a bad name but it is you who invite infamy and scorn and ridicule upon yourself.] (3)

[Note—Laxman has jumped to the defence of Lord Ram and puts forth the argument that the bow had already decayed; it was very rusty as well as crumbly because it was very old and had been kept in storage without use, resulting in it losing its tensile strength and material substance which had undergone severe decay. In this situation, anyone who would have touched it even for the purpose of routine cleaning would have caused some damage to it, such as a fracture to its frame. But it does not mean that the cleaner had any intent of either insulting the bow or purposely breaking it.

Lord Ram, says Laxman, went to examine it like other kings and princes, and that too only when their Guru sage Vishwamitra had ordered him to do so. The Guru perhaps wanted Lord Ram to have a look at this unique bow which was a novelty of sorts because thousands of kings and princes had gathered there just for the sake of this single bow, so there must surely be some mystery about it. And when one sees anything that is unique and magical, something that is a rarity and has an antique value, it is normal for him to go and see it. When one examines something rare and curious, he will first see it from all angles, then touch it to have a feeling of it, and then softly turn it sideways or lift it slightly to have a better understanding and feel of it. The examiner has no intention at all of harming the item on display, but if that thing inadvertently breaks while being examined then the person who was examining it must not be held guilty of willful and premeditated damage.

Laxman argues that the same thing has happened in this case also. Lord Ram had no intention of willfully breaking the bow to cause any insult to Shiva; it is unthinkable for him to even imagine it. The bow crumbled because it was already decayed and fragile. So there was no ground for Parashuram to become so angry, for Lord Ram does not get any honour for breaking something that was already rusty and fragile. After all, there is no valour and bravery in breaking an old bow, isn't it? The sage must understand that one cannot expect his well-being and good name by getting angry without a justified reason

and at trifles—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 173.

Now, given that the damage has been done, merely shouting and creating a ruckus or throwing tantrums won't rectify it; anger is no solution. If the sage has so great affection for the bow then they must all sit together to find out a remedy—to investigate how this bow can be repaired and restored to its former glory. Laxman suggests exactly this a little later to the angry Parashuram in an attempt to calm him down—that it would be better to call some expert bow-smith and get the bow repaired instead of wasting time and energy on anger—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

It will be noted that each time Laxman had spoken to sage Parashuram, he had done so with a smile on his face. Now, this implies two things—one, that Laxman wanted to convey the message that he is not scared of sage Parashuram like all other kings, and two, that he wanted to be as polite and humble as he could be because smile indicates a friendly, a positive attitude and surely not a hostile one.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram got the hint from Laxman, and when his turn came to speak to Parashuram he too had offered the same excuse—that the bow broke on its own as it was very old and decayed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283.]

बोले चितइ परसु की ओरा । रे सठ सुनेहि सुभाउ न मोरा ॥ ४ ॥
बालकु बोलि बधउँ नहिं तोही । केवल मुनि जड़ जानहि मोही ॥ ५ ॥

bōlē cita'i parasu kī ōrā. rē saṭha sunēhi subhā'u na mōrā. 4.
bālaku bōli badha'um' nahīn tōhī. kēvala muni jara jānahi mōhī. 5.

[Laxman's out-of-turn bold replies and smiles were taken as an affront by sage Parashuram because he was not accustomed to such behaviour. Whenever the sage talked with or confronted kings and princes, they had always stood before him with a bowed head and folded hands, agreeing to whatever he said, but never ever gathering courage to reply him back or argue with him. So the sage regarded Laxman's behaviour as highly objectionable, and each statement of Laxman added fuel to the fire of anger of the sage.]

Sage Parashuram glanced at his battle-axe (in a hint that Laxman be warned of it) and retorted menacingly to Laxman—'Oh you stupid and dull-witted boy; have you not heard of my nature and temperament (i.e. about my temper, and zero tolerance to bad behaviour and impertinence)? (4)

I am not killing you (and chopping-off your head with me blood-thirsty battle-axe) because you are merely a child (and killing a child would be sin)¹. In your utter ignorance you think that I am merely a run-of-mill ordinary hermit (because had you known of my glories, my exploits, my famous deeds and achievements, you wouldn't have dared to speak with me the way you are doing at present)². (5)

[Note—¹To kill a child or a very young bow ("Baalak") is a grave sin—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 167. The context here is mother Kaushalya comforting Bharat who was gravely grieving at the death of his father king Dasrath and for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita going to exile in the forest. Bharat told her that he considers himself a great sinner because he had been, unwittingly and without his knowledge though, the cause of both these unfortunate incidents. It was

then that Kaushalya lists some great sins that are unpardonable and lamentable, and ‘the killing of a child’ is one such great sin.

Remember: Both Lord Ram and Laxman are of a tender age, and this fact has been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 256 where the mother of Sita also calls Lord Ram a ‘Baalak’, a young boy of an immature age.

Earlier, Sita’s father had also called the two brothers ‘Baalak’ when he had first seen them while welcoming sage Vishwamitra to Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 216.

²Now we shall read below how sage Parashuram boasts about himself. Boasting and haughtiness are definitely not good virtues, and the lesson we derive from Parashuram’s episode is that one must not be boastful and haughty because one fine day all our ego and pretensions would bite the dust in a very humiliating way like Parashuram’s.

Later on in this epic story we will read that when Angad was sent by Lord Ram to the court of the demon king Ravana in an attempt to make truce and avoid war, Ravana had also boasted haughtily. At the end Ravana had to bite a humble pie when he was humiliated in full court by Angad who challenged him to move his foot from the ground to prove that he is indeed as strong and powerful as he claims himself to be. Ravana had failed to move Angad’s foot even a fraction of an inch just like this bow which could not be moved an inch by the boastful and haughty kings. This episode of Angad and Ravana is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35. {Refer especially to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Sage Parashuram thought that Laxman thinks that being a hermit and sage he (Parashuram) won’t harm him. So the sage warns Laxman to be careful because aside of being a sage and hermit he was an invincible warrior too. Laxman should not take him for granted; Laxman should not play fools with him anymore.]

बाल ब्रह्मचारी अति कोही । बिस्व बिदित छत्रियकुल द्रोही ॥ ६ ॥
 भुजबल भूमि भूप बिनु कीन्ही । बिपुल बार महिदेवन्ह दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
 सहसबाहु भुज छेदनिहारा । परसु बिलोकु महीपकुमारा ॥ ८ ॥

bāla brahmacārī ati kōhī. bisva bidita chatriyakula drōhī. 6.

bhujabala bhūmi bhūpa binu kīnhī. bipula bāra mahidēvanha dīnhī. 7.

sahasabāhu bhuja chēdanihārā. parasu bilōku mahīpakumārā. 8.

[Sage Parashuram now boastfully describes his own glories and achievements.]

I am a ‘Baal Brahmachari’, a celibate since birth, and am renowned for my anger (temper). It is known by the whole world that I am inimical to the Kshatriya¹ (warrior) race. (6)

On the strength of my arms I had eliminated all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth repeatedly, and had each time given the land to the Brahmins. (7)

Oh son of a king! Look here at this battle-axe which had chopped-off the arms and head of my enemy Sahastrabaahu². (8)

[Note—¹The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes or segments by ancient sages for the sake of convenience and proper regulation of the huge society. It helped in judicious distribution of work to be done, to regulate the functioning of the

society by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. This system helped in judicious regulation of the working of the society as a whole because each individual member of any given Varna knew what is expected of him. It helped in proper distribution of work that had to be done for day-to-day survival, without any duplicity and tussle.

These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called 'Kshatriya', and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in *Devipurān Mahabhagwat*, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the soldiers cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a 'heaven-on-earth' if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and gives protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis

necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

This word ‘Brahmin’ is too often misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean a particular member of the society who is supposed to be given respect, no matter what his moral and educational standard is. The real intention is not that even a corrupt, unwise, morally depraved and foolish person should be honoured just because he is born a ‘Brahmin’. The intention of the scriptures is never this. In ancient times this was the class of people who were designated to study the scriptures and act as moral and practical guide to the rest of the society. This was envisioned by our ancestors to help regulate the functioning of the society in an orderly manner by dividing the entire working into four clear segments and delineating each segment with a list of duties its members were supposed to do. This prevented clash and duplicity of work, as each of the four classes knew what it is supposed to do. This in effect created a hierarchy in the society, with the learned ones who were known as the ‘Brahmins’ occupying the upper rung just like a patriarch of a large extended family who oversees the working and welfare of the entire family. A patriarch is an old man, and has the backing of years of experience behind him. Obviously he is the most competent man to give sane and rationale advice to the younger generation. This exactly was the role of the Brahmin.

Even in the modern world, a child is taught to give respect to his elders; its part of his moral education. Hence, ‘paying respects to Brahmins’ should be understood in the correct perspective.

²The story of sage Parashuram killing kings and the thousand-armed Sahastrabaahu has been narrated above as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268 of this chapter known as Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

Refer also to Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254.

By and by, the Kshatriya class had become very haughty and arrogant because all physical powers and military strength were vested in it. The king’s treasury was supposed to be a common pool where the society could keep its wealth that it generates by toil, and the king was merely its custodian. But as time passed, the kings began to treat this treasury as their personal property, and while they rolled in luxury the peasant class, the working class that toiled day in and day out to generate this wealth hadn’t a square meal to eat in their empty tummies and a roof to cover them against the vagaries of cruel Nature. Though the powers and wealth of the Kshatriya class were meant for the welfare of the society as a whole, more often than not these elements went to the head of kings, making them arrogant, haughty, exploitative and insensitive towards others.

In this context, the elimination of such wild kings belonging to the Kshatriya Varna who had deviated from their duties and moral responsibilities that were ordained by ancient sages and seers became obligatory for the Supreme Lord of the world as the Lord

was the Father of all, and he could not bear with one of his off-springs making others suffer because of his own pervert behaviour and selfishness. Hence, the Lord assumed the form of sage Parashuram to teach a lesson to such wicked kings who had fallen from their paths.

Killing such Kshatriya kings and restoring the earth to Brahmins should be viewed in this context; it has a great symbolic meaning. Whenever evil tendencies and negativity rises in this world, be it in the guise of demons or kings, the Lord comes down to set the house in order. This is the reason why sage Parashuram is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

The logical spin-off of this is that Lord Ram and sage Parashuram are both the same Lord in different roles. What Lord Ram did for the welfare of sages and the humble creatures of the world by killing their tormentor demons led by Ravana of Lanka, sage Parashuram did the same thing by killing arrogant and wicked Kshatriya kings and handing over the world to pious and holy men known as Brahmins.

Going further on the issue we deduce that this is the precise reason why Laxman was not afraid of Parashuram because he, Laxman, being an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar, knew the real identity of the sage—that he was a manifestation of his beloved Lord Vishnu just like Lord Ram, his brother. Laxman knew that sage Parashuram cannot harm him because Lord Vishnu loves Seshnath. It is only due to the gross body that Parashuram has that he has forgotten his real identity and who Ram and Laxman were. We shall read a little later on in this narration that finally the sage has realized the true identity of Lord Ram, and then he had bowed before him, asked for forgiveness and went to the mountains for doing penance. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

दो०. मातु पितहि जनि सोचबस करसि महीसकिसोर ।
गर्भन्ह के अर्भक दलन परसु मोर अति घोर ॥ २७२ ॥

dōhā.

mātu pitahi jani sōcabasa karasi mahīsakisōra.
garbhanha kē arbhaka dalana parasu mōra ati ghōra. 272.

Oh you young son of a king! Don't do anything that would put your mother and father to grief. My battle-axe is very fierce and merciless; it can kill even an unborn off-spring (i.e. the embryo) in its mother's womb. (Doha no. 272)

[Note—Just imagine the horrible and most disgusting way Parashuram is threatening Laxman without realising that he is publicly acknowledging that he is guilty of such a heinous crime as destroying a mature embryo, which obviously is a grave crime and sin.

Parashuram implies that he has spared Laxman for two reasons—one, that he is still a child (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272), and two, that he does not want to be accused of giving unwarranted sorrows to a great king of the Raghu dynasty, king Dasrath, by killing Laxman as Dasrath had not committed any offense and would surely be extremely sorrowful when he hears of his son's death because he loves him very much.

This Doha tells us how even an exalted person of the stature of a sage and a hermit would lose his high stature and neutralise all the good effects of his meritorious deeds

when he commits heinous crimes out of his arrogance and haughtiness or in a fit of anger as was in the case of sage Parashuram. Born in a sage's Brahmin family and having done severe Tapa (penances and austerities), he was perfectly eligible to occupy a high spiritual stature in the society of great sages, hermits and ascetics. But instead of acquiring any good fame and spiritual credit in his life, he has gone down in history as 'a merciless killer of kings and unborn children (while they are still in their mother's wombs in the form of an embryo)', an achievement that would put even the greatest of sinners to shame, and definitely not something to be proud of. In fact, the horrible deeds of Parashuram had cast a long dark shadow on the otherwise exalted lineage of sages tracing their origin to the great sage Bhṛigu.

Now, if we closely examine what sage Parashuram says in this Doha no. 272, that his axe kills unborn children in their mother's wombs, and compare it with what he says earlier in Chaupai no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 272 where he says that he is sparing Laxman because he is merely an immature boy, a child ("Baalak"), there appears to be a contradiction—on the one hand he says that he does not spare even an unborn child, and then he says that he is sparing Laxman because he is only a child or an immature boy. How do we reconcile these two statements of Parashuram?

Well, the deduction is clear—he did not actually kill the embryo in the womb because that would require the mother to be killed first. Killing an innocent and helpless woman is more severe a crime than killing a male warrior in battle. What Parashuram actually meant was that his name created such a terror in the hearts of women-folk that as soon as a pregnant woman heard his name or a queen heard that her husband, the king, had to face Parashuram's wrath, she would abort automatically. He singled out the battle-axe for this (dis)honour because he used to kill his enemies with it by chopping off their heads. So, whenever a pregnant woman heard that sage Parashuram has arrived waving his battle-axe, she was so terrified and horrified that she aborted immediately!

This conclusion is not merely a wild guess but a fact because sage Parashuram has himself endorsed it a little later in Doha no. 279 below.]

चौ०. बिहसि लखनु बोले मृदु बानी । अहो मुनीसु महा भटमानी ॥ १ ॥
पुनि पुनि मोहि देखाव कुठारू । चहत उड़ावन फूँकि पहारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bihasi lakhanu bōlē mṛḍu bānī. ahō munīsu mahā bhaṭamānī. 1.
puni puni mōhi dēkhāva kuṭhārū. cahata uṛāvana phūmkī pahārū. 2.

Laxman smiled once again in a sarcastic manner and said to sage Parashuram—'Oh sage! You regard (think) yourself as some great warrior [1], and are repeatedly showing me your axe as if you want to threaten me with it. It is like attempting to blow a huge mountain away by puffing breath at it [2]. (1-2)

[Note—Laxman essentially tells sage Parashuram that finally the latter has met his match. He tells the angry sage that he is very boastful, haughty and pretentious when he keeps on repeating that he is renowned for killing kings with his battle-axe. May be he is correct, but this time round the story is different. He has met his match in Laxman, and threatening him into submission with his battle-axe is like a ridiculously mad attempt to make the mountain move by blowing breath towards it.

Laxman taunts Parashuram when he addresses him as a “Maha Bhat”, meaning a great warrior. He means that sages are famed for their politeness, their loving, caring and friendly attitude, as well as for their peaceful and calm demeanours, and never for anger, vengeance, revenge and blood-shed. Further, a sage is never expected to be haughty and proud of his achievements as Parashuram is—“Bhat-Maani”, literally meaning ‘a proud warrior’. These negative characters are not befitting of a great sage. And if this is the case, then Parashuram is merely a warrior and not a sage, and therefore Laxman is within his rights to face him with a tit-for-tat reaction like any brave warrior would face his adversary.

And to top it all, isn’t sage Parashuram ashamed of himself for boasting of being a slayer of infants and even un-borns; is this some great thing for which he is so proud? Shame to him for even uttering such a reprehensible thing as killing of infants and aborting of embryos! Has he completely lost his senses and committed his wits to demons to be so naïve as to admit of this horrendous crime and atrocity in public, and then have the temerity and audacity to claim fame for such a sinful and vile act?

Laxman implies that if Parashuram behaves like a sage and a hermit in accordance with his attire and lineage, then he can expect due respect from him, but if he boasts to be a warrior then Laxman would face him like a warrior faces his opponent; there’s nothing wrong in it. This fact is also endorsed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from line no. 2 of Doha no. 281—till Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Another reason for Laxman smiling sarcastically at Parashuram and treating him with contempt is that the former claims to be a great warrior and sage while at the same time openly claiming to be a killer of unborn children who are still in their mother’s womb, a sign of an extremely cruel and sinful person who is no less than a demon. How can such a pervert man expect anyone to show respect to him? Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 272, and (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 167.

So, how can such a sinful man who is guilty of voluntarily killing embryos in mothers’ wombs call himself a ‘warrior’? Rather, such a person is a taint on the warrior race, and he deserves condemnation instead of honour.

Laxman said that Parashuram attempts to brow-beat him by showing his battle-axe ‘repeatedly’. Well, till this point of time, Parashuram has indeed invoked his battle-axe three times in quick succession as follows—Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 272, and line no. 2 of Doha no. 272 itself.]

इहाँ कुहड़बतिया कोउ नाहीं । जे तरजनी देखि मरि जाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

ihām̃ kumharabatiyā kō'u nāhīm̃. jē tarajanī dēkhi mari jāhīm̃. 3.

Here there is no one who is like a pumpkin-in-the-bud which withers away or collapses as soon as an index finger is raised against it¹. [In other words, I, Laxman, am not like the super-sensitive mimosa plant that would shrivel up as soon as someone touches it. Don’t think that I am scared of you and moved by your boasts, which however do not show you in good light in the first place.] (3)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech to mean someone who is extremely sensitive by nature or is afraid of even harmless things.

Laxman refers to the other kings in the assembly who became terrified when they saw sage Parashuram. He means that Parashuram should not treat Laxman in the same way that he had treated these impotent kings who fell at his feet and shivered at the sight

of the axe that he held. Parashuram must remember that he is facing a warrior of his own match, and not a coward prince. So, Parashuram must not expect Laxman to be brow-beaten by his boisterous mannerisms.]

देखि कुठारु सरासन बाना । मैं कछु कहा सहित अभिमाना ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi kuṭhāru sarāsana bānā. mair̥m kachu kahā sahita abhimānā. 4.

I (Laxman) have said some words of pride to show you my right to protect my dignity and self-respect after seeing your external features that bears an axe, a bow and an arrow.

[In other words, since you appear to be a warrior by your external features because you bear arms such as an axe, a bow and arrows, and have openly called yourself a ‘brave warrior’, I must stand up against your angry boasts and insulting behaviour towards me in order to protect my dignity and self-respect as no warrior worth his salt would ever tolerate in a cowardly manner such insults upon his self-respect as you are inflicting upon me in an open court. This is why I have replied to you in a tit-for-tat manner, though I do not intend to insult you in any manner whatsoever.] (4)

[Note—Refer: Lord Ram’s explanation of Laxman’s behaviour towards Parashuram in Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 281, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 282. Here, Lord Ram has explained that it was because of Parashuram’s external features that resembled that of some warrior that Laxman had stood up to reply sternly to him as he got the impression that Parashuram was some fighter who has come to create a hurdle in the marriage ceremony and was itching for a fight.

Being a warrior prince himself, it was natural for Laxman not to be cowed down by threats and wielding of weapons; only a coward would be afraid of such menacing attitude of his opponent.

Therefore, Laxman was not at fault for replying Parashuram sternly in the same language that the sage had used.]

भृगुसुत समुझि जनेउ बिलोकी । जो कछु कहहु सहउँ रिस रोकी ॥ ५ ॥
सुर महिसुर हरिजन अरु गाई । हमरें कुल इन्ह पर न सुराई ॥ ६ ॥

bhṛgusuta samujhi janē'u bilōkī. jō kachu kahahu saha'um̐ risa rōkī. 5.
sura mahisura harijana aru gā'ī. hamarēm̐ kula inha para na surā'ī. 6.

I (Laxman) tolerate whatever you say by somehow suppressing my anger and controlling myself (i.e. resisting the urge to challenge you for a duel to prove who is stronger and a real warrior) because I understand you to be a son of the exalted lineage of sage Bhṛigu¹, and also because you wear a sacred thread (showing clearly that you are a Brahmin)². (5)

Indeed, my family and the race (i.e. the dynasty of Kshatriya kings) to which I belong do not find honour in showing lordship (i.e. pretend to be senior to; showing valour and strength) over ‘Surs’ (the ‘gods who live in heaven’), ‘Mahisurs’ (the Brahmins; literally, the ‘gods who live on earth’), ‘Harijans’ (devotees of Lord Hari, or Lord Vishnu), and ‘Gaai’ (cows)³.

[Since you are a Brahmin, I do not want to do anything that would violate this self-imposed restraint that our family and our forefathers have been practicing since

ancient times. We do not treat ourselves senior to gods, Brahmins, devotees of Lord Hari, and the holy cows; all of them are revered by us.

So, I do not want to go down in history with an ignominious tag as being the one who had insulted and fought with a Brahmin sage belonging to the exalted race of sage Bhrigu, notwithstanding your angry, rude, vengeful, ruckus, haughty and bellicose behaviour which is completely at odds with the traditional way a sage should talk, behave and act.

I do not want to repeat the mistake you are committing by giving your family and race a bad name by speaking, behaving and acting in the way you are doing.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268.

³Laxman means to say that Parashuram is showing him his battle-axe repeatedly to frighten him, to threaten him, but Laxman is resisting from drawing his own arms, which is the arrow and the bow he holds, and challenging Parashuram for a duel because the latter wears a sacred thread, and this means he is a Brahmin. To fight with a Brahmin and humiliate him by defeating him in full public view, which Laxman was sure to do if the two actually fought with each other into a duel, is a great sin.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 294, sage Vasistha, the royal priest of Ayodhya, praises king Dasrath, the father of Laxman, by saying that he has always served his Guru (moral preceptor and teacher), Bipra (Brahmins), Dhenu (cows), and Surs (gods). So Laxman was obliged to follow the tradition of his family by giving due respect to a Brahmin, which in this case was sage Parashuram.

Laxman is exercising self-restraint because of this problem, but Parashuram thinks that Laxman is merely a boy and cannot compare himself with the mighty warrior that Parashuram considers himself to be. This is why Laxman retorts with the stern words as spoken in these verses to warn Parashuram that he should not treat Laxman's restraint as a sign of submission or cowardice but as a sign of self-imposed restriction to uphold age-old tradition that one should not fight and humiliate a Brahmin under any circumstance as it would be a grave sin. Refer Chaupai line no. 7 herein below.]

बधेँ पापु अपकीरति हारेँ । मारतहूँ पा परिअ तुझारेँ ॥ ७ ॥

badhēm pāpu apakīrati hārēm. māratahūṃ pā pari'a tumhārēm. 7.

Killing you, a Brahmin, in a battle would be a grave sin, and to lose in the battle (willingly, just to show respect to you as a Brahmin) would bring infamy and humiliation to me. [Therefore, it is not wise for me to challenge you for a duel. But don't take it as my weakness or my running away from the challenge. I am not going to repeat the sin you have committed by letting blood at the fall of a hat and for reason that is most hilarious and untenable!]

Hence, it is prudent for me to pay respect to you by falling at your feet even if you beat me. [You are a sage and an elderly man. I have been taught to show great respect to such people irrespective of the situation and the provocation. So I prefer to humbly submit before you instead of confronting you.] (7)

[Note—This verse concludes what Laxman has said in the previous verse nos. 5-6 above.

He makes it clear here why he is tolerating all the nonsense that sage Parashuram is

babbling and the haughty way he is behaving—because he (Laxman) does not want to commit the sin of hitting back at a Brahmin and hurting him, nor does he want to invite humiliation for himself by first challenging Parashuram for a duel and then being forced to step back to avoid hurting a Brahmin for the fear of committing a great sin, and by inference being forced to accept defeat inspite of the fact that he is perfectly able to show Parashuram the dust in a duel.

Laxman was correct to say that even if sage Parashuram, being a Brahmin, hits him, it is wiser for Laxman to bow before the sage and not hit him back because it is a established principle that one should never hurt a Brahmin even if the latter becomes hostile and scolds a person, because a Brahmin is always to be shown respect—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Even Lord Vishnu had politely borne with the insult when sage Bhrigu had once kicked the Lord on his chest out of anger. Well, Laxman knew of this incident and hence he says that even if Parashuram, a descendent of Bhrigu, hits him, he would still bow before the feet of Parashuram simply because he is a Brahmin and belongs to the family of Bhrigu, and not because Laxman is afraid of him and has surrendered before him to avoid being injured or killed.]

कोटि कुलिस सम बचनु तुझारा । व्यर्थ धरहु धनु बान कुठारा ॥ ८ ॥

kōṭi kulisa sama bacanu tumhārā. byartha dharahu dhanu bāna kuṭhārā. 8.

[Now, in order to make it clear to Parashuram that what Laxman has just said about ‘falling at the former’s feet’ does not mean that he is afraid of him, Laxman taunts him further.]

Your (Parashuram’s) words are as sharp and hard to bear with as the ‘Kulis’. [The Kulis is also known as the ‘Vajra’ which is the weapon of Indra, the king of gods. It is said to be made of the hardest material in existence and is exceptionally sharp like a razor, striking hard and creating terror all around. Laxman means that the words of Parashuram are very sharp, caustic and irritating. The sage does not know how to speak politely in a civil manner, and speaks as if acid is being poured on the listener.]

Therefore, it is useless for you to hold a bow, an arrow and a battle-axe (because their purpose of subduing anyone who dares oppose you, and forcing him to submit himself before you is very well served by your words alone). [That is, you need not trouble yourself by carrying the weight of a bow, arrows and a heavy axe, because when you get angry at someone and scold him, your scorching words are sufficient to terrorise him and make him faint, and they have the same, if not more, horrifying effect upon the person concerned as the sight of the weapons you carry.] (8)

[Note—Remember: Brahmins who did Tapa (penances and austerities) possessed great mystical powers. When they got annoyed with anyone they would merely ‘curse’ him, and their curse had the potential of destroying the offender like any other powerful weapon.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 109. Here it is reiterated that even if anyone manages to escape punishment in the form of death by Indra’s weapon known as Kulis (Vajra) and Kaal’s (god of death’s) weapon known as Kaal-danda, he cannot escape being burnt to death by the scorching effects of the fire of wrath (curse) of a Brahmin.

So, Laxman taunts Parashuram by saying that since he is a Brahmin, why does he not destroy his opponents by merely cursing them instead of getting his hand bloodied by killing them physically with such weapons as a bow and an arrow or a battle-axe that would look more suitable in the hands of a Kshatriya king than in the hands of a Brahmin. Parashuram is expert in using caustic words that can scorch a person as if hot liquid has been poured over him. And therefore he can simply give effect to his wrath by cursing his opponent instead of wasting his energy by waging a physical battle against him and using these difficult and heavy weapons.

As is to be expected, these words of Laxman fanned Parashuram's anger further instead of dousing it. This will be clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow Doha no. 273 herein below.]

दो०. जो बिलोकि अनुचित कहेउँ छमहु महामुनि धीर ।
सुनि सरोष भृगुबंसमनि बोले गिरा गभीर ॥ २७३ ॥

dōhā.

jō bilōki anucita kahē'um³ chamahu mahāmuni dhīra.
suni sarōṣa bhr̥gubansamani bōlē girā gabhīra. 273.

I have said unwarranted words when I saw them (i.e. when I saw your weapons, the axe, the bow and the arrow) (because I thought that you are some haughty warrior showing yourself off and itching for a fight). So oh great sage, have patience and forgive me.'

When 'Bhrigumani' (literally 'the gem of sage Bhrigu's family'; i.e. sage Parashuram) heard Laxman politely asking for forgiveness (after first sternly replying on his face in an insulting manner, and then taunting him about his way of speaking and holding of weapons), he became very peeved, and angrily said in a grave voice—(Doha no. 273)

[Note—Parashuram's annoyance had two prominent reasons—one, why did Laxman speak to him sternly and in an impolite manner to cause insult to him when he knew that he was a Brahmin, and two, it was the first time in his life that anyone had ever dared to speak back so boldly and fearlessly with Parashuram.

Parashuram was accustomed to people falling over their backs, heads over heels, to appease him so that he does not get angry with them. And here was Laxman, a young boy, who entered into a verbal duel with him. It was a height of impertinence and disobedience in the views of Parashuram that a Kshatriya prince should talk back to him, instead of bowing his head in submission.

After insulting Parashuram with impunity and teaching him a bitter lesson of his life for which he was not ready, Laxman now asks for forgiveness, putting the sage on a sticky ground. When an opponent begs forgiveness and even gives a reason for his earlier uncalled for behaviour of being rude, a noble warrior or a Brahmin is morally bound to excuse him and not punish him.

The reason which Laxman cites is justifiable: he says that when he saw the weapons that Parashuram held, such as the bow, the arrow and the axe, he had thought that Parashuram was a jealous warrior who has come to show off his strength in the middle of the society of kings and princes, or to create an unnecessary ruckus to divert attention upon himself and come to the limelight to establish himself and get recognition.

Otherwise there was no reason for so much futile jumping and shouting just because a rusty old bow was broken.

But when Laxman realized that this person, Parashuram, whom he had mistaken to be a jealous and haughty warrior, was actually a great sage who traces his line to the exalted race of sages descending from sage Bhrigu, he immediately became polite and asked for forgiveness.

Lord Ram has endorsed Laxman when he requests sage Parashuram not to mind Laxman's words or behaviour and excuse him because he is merely a boy, had behaved in an insulting manner with the sage because he had mistaken the latter for a haughty warrior, and because it is the natural reaction of a Kshatriya prince when anyone comes and threatens him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

In this situation, if sage Parashuram does not forgive Laxman than it is he whom the world would raise its fingers against—because one of the stellar qualities of a sage and a Brahmin is 'forgiveness and tolerance'. Thus, Parashuram was in a quandary. Given to being vengeful, angry and wrathful as his fundamental nature and character, Parashuram became angrier instead of calming down and ending the bitter saga.]

चौ०. कौसिक सुनहु मंद यहु बालकु । कुटिल कालबस निज कुल घालकु ॥ १ ॥
भानु बंस राकेस कलंकू । निपट निरंकुस अबुध असंकू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kausika sunahu manda yahu bālaku. kuṭila kālabasa nija kula ghālaku. 1.
bhānu bansa rākēsa kalaṅkū. nipaṭa niraṅkusa abudha asaṅkū. 2.

[Extremely peeved by Laxman's behaviour and angered at the way he rebuked sage Parashuram, the latter did not want to talk with Laxman any longer. So, he turned to sage Vishwamitra and said—]

'Listen Kuasik (another name of sage Vishwamitra). This boy is very stupid and wicked. He seems to be under the grip of the death-god known as 'Kaal' (i.e. he is courting death by instigating me), and is therefore inviting ruin for his own family by his own impertinence. [In other words, Laxman goes on instigating me (Parashuram) though I do not want to kill him as he is merely a boy. But there is a limit to my tolerance. If he provokes me further I will kill him, and then his whole family would grieve.] (1)

He is a scar on the face of the full moon representing the glory of the Solar Race (to which his father, king Dasrath and the rest of his forefathers belong). He is extremely unruly, rowdy, wild, unmanageable, boisterous and reckless. Not only that, he is foolish and dull-witted as well as ignorant of the consequences of his words, actions and behaviour. [He, Laxman, does not understand the gravity of the situation. If I lose my cool or self-control and actually carry out my threat by swinging my battle-axe at him, he would be killed instantly. He is so idiotic and haughty that he does not seem to realize this. Say, can a Kshatriya prince ever withstand the wrath and the curse of a Brahmin sage? Why is Laxman not realizing this?] (2)

[Note—This outburst of sage Parashuram is in answer to Laxman's dressing-down of the former a while ago in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 273.

Unable to cope with Laxman boldly preaching him as to how he should have behaved, sage Parashuram was so much irritated and angered with Laxman that he did not want to instigate the latter any more to provoke him to unleash another palisade of insults, which would further aggravate the situation and may force Parashuram to actually carry out his threats of killing Laxman. Further, the sage was angry also because one should not answer back at someone who is senior to him in terms of age, experience, knowledge and abilities. Laxman was yet a boy, but Parashuram was an aged sage of repute, a renowned warrior, and one who had done great Tapa (penances and austerity) as a result of which he possessed profound mystical powers. So, in effect, there was no comparison between sage Parashuram and Laxman.

This is what the angry sage means when he told Vishwamitra that this boy is stupid, ill-witted, does not know the consequences of his actions and behaviour, and is inviting ruin for his whole family. Not only would Laxman invite scorn from the world for insulting a mighty sage by speaking irreverentially with him but would also certainly invite physical harm by instigating a mighty warrior that Parashuram treated himself to be.

We find here that both Parashuram and Laxman are hot-headed. And when two such individuals meet in a confrontational situation, god can only help. But there is another spin to it—when an individual who thinks that he is superior to all others and goes around throwing his weight over all and sundry, threatening them and calling them names, suddenly meets another person of his match, the wind in the sail of the former passes away. When the first person realizes to his dismay that his boasts and threats that worked on other docile people and made them surrender to him in an abject manner won't work on this second person who matches him in every respect, the former makes a u-turn, proving that he was having his way till now simply because he hadn't met his real adversary.

In the present case we find exactly this to happen: till this day, sage Parashuram went around threatening and killing kings and princes at will, but now he is forced on a back-foot because he got the wind that if he takes one physical wrong step in his haughtiness, such as actually lifting and hitting Laxman with his axe to punish him, it would boomerang upon him and would do more harm to him than to Laxman.

So in brief, Parashuram wanted to avoid further confrontation with Laxman. Thus, he looked up and addressed sage Vishwamitra because the latter was deemed as Laxman's guardian. Remember: Parashuram has repeatedly called Laxman a "Baalak", a young boy or a child. When a child is out of control or acts irreverentially, one would naturally talk to the child's father, guardian or teacher, all three roles now vested in sage Vishwamitra, to rein in the troublesome boy who has become disobedient and has no sense of good manners. The father, guardian or the teacher is expected to exercise his influence upon the unruly boy and bring him under control. {(i)Vishwamitra as a 'father and guardian' = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208. (ii)Vishwamitra as a 'teacher or Guru' = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218; etc.} So Parashuram sought Vishwamitra's help to keep Laxman under control because the latter was Laxman's Guru, guardian and a foster-father at present.

Another reason for Parashuram turning to sage Vishwamitra was that the latter himself being a 'sage' would understand the gravity of the situation and the deemed insult that is being caused to another sage of repute by a prince talking with the latter in a disrespectful manner as Laxman is doing at present. Parashuram thought that amongst all those present in the assembly, the only person who would empathise with him is another

sage, i.e. Vishwamitra, and the latter is the only one who could prevail upon the naughty Laxman to be quiet because the latter would listen to no one else.

Parashuram's intention was to find out and punish the individual who had broken the bow, and not to enter into an unnecessary and futile verbal duel with some unknown prince who is not guilty of breaking the bow. The bow was broken by Lord Ram, and instead of being able to turn on the heat on the Lord, Parashuram was forced to dissipate his anger on Ram's brother, Laxman. It was a waste of time and energy to have a heated debate with Laxman, and so this nonsense had to be stopped so that the attention can be diverted to the actual offender, Lord Ram.

Hence, Parashuram turned towards sage Vishwamitra in the hope that the latter would instruct Laxman to be careful and keep quiet. This intention of Parashuram will be clear in the following two verses, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that follow herein below.

But as we shall discover, sage Vishwamitra did not intervene, and Laxman would further taunt Parashuram in bitter terms.

The question arises: Why did sage Vishwamitra not intervene and pull-up Laxman for his behaviour? Well, we see that earlier also, when Laxman had sternly rebuked king Janak when the latter had declared that since no king could break the bow it is deemed that there are no strong warriors left on the surface of the earth and that Sita would have to remain unmarried, Vishwamitra had not intervened; he kept quiet. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 253 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The probable reasons are two—(i) sage Vishwamitra was well aware of Laxman's tempestuous nature unlike Parashuram. So he did not wish to invite insult upon his own self by saying anything to Laxman while he is angry. (ii) Vishwamitra had known that the two brothers were divine personalities, i.e. Lord Vishnu and Lord Seshnath in the human form of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively. Seshnath is the legendary thousand hooded serpent who supports the earth on its hood. Seshnath hisses violently and fire is spewed out with its hiss. A serpent is by nature a vicious creature; it is extremely poisonous and dangerous when provoked. A man in his senses would always avoid any direct contact with a live poisonous snake. Laxman was, therefore, best to be left alone and avoided!]

काल कवलु होइहि छन माहीं । कहउँ पुकारि खोरि मोहि नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

तुझ हटकहु जाँ चहु उबारा । कहि प्रतापु बलु रोषु हमारा ॥ ४ ॥

kāla kavalu hō'ihī chana māhīm. kaha'um' pukāri khōri mōhi nāhīm. 3.

tumha haṭakahu jauñ cahahu ubārā. kahi pratāpu balu rōṣu hamārā. 4.

He (Laxman) would be in the jaws of death in an instant (if he does not behave himself). I openly declare this, and hereat let no one blame me for the consequences henceforth. (3)

If you (Vishwamitra) want him to be saved from this horror then please do something to rein him in by telling him about my glories, my valour and strength as well as my vicious anger (against which no one has ever survived till now).' (4)

[Note—Refer note appended to previous verse nos. 2-3 herein above.

In other words, Parashuram requests sage Vishwamitra to advise Laxman to behave properly with a sage of Parashuram's stature. Vishwamitra should tell Laxman about the glories of sage Parashuram, about his reputation as an invincible warrior who has not spared anyone who dared to defy him. In spite of all these warnings, if Laxman continues with his impertinence, if this irritating spat continues, then if Parashuram loses control over his anger and hits Laxman hard, then nobody should blame him for harming a boy.

Parashuram has said the same thing again a little later in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275 that “no one should blame him if he kills this boy (Laxman) who speaks in such a caustic and wicked manner”. So we conclude that Parashuram was angry with Laxman not because the latter had harmed the bow but because he speaks boldly and irreverentially with him, something to which Parashuram was not accustomed.]

लखन कहेउ मुनि सुजसु तुझारा । तुझहि अछत को बरनै पारा ॥ ५ ॥
अपने मुँह तुझ आपनि करनी । बार अनेक भाँति बहु बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

lakhana kahē'u muni sujasu tumhārā. tumhahi achata kō baranai pārā. 5.
apanē muṁha tumha āpani karanī. bāra anēka bhāmṭi bahu baranī. 6.

Laxman was fearless and unrelenting as he retorted to the sage's threats in a taunting manner—‘Oh sage, who else can laud your glories more competently and effectively than you can do yourself. (5)

Verily, you have indeed praised yourself repeatedly, recounting your glories and abilities, as well as citing your deeds and achievements in your own words in variety of ways. [In other words, when you (Parashuram) are ready to list your achievements and heap praises on your own self, when you are blowing your own bugle and beating your own trumpet, what is the need for someone else to praise you? Well, you know about your own glories better than a third person can ever know about them. And you have already boasted about them¹, so where is the need for sage Vishwamitra to tell me about them again?²] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

²A man who boasts about his own achievements is not regarded as honourable and respectable. He is pretentious and boastful. Such a man is more often than not an egoist, haughty and arrogant; he is full of vanity and a false sense of self-importance. None of these are noble characters, especially in a sage. That is why Laxman retorted to Parashuram in a sarcastic manner.]

नहिं संतोषु त पुनि कछु कहहू । जनि रिस रोकि दुसह दुख सहहू ॥ ७ ॥
बीरब्रती तुझ धीर अछोभा । गारी देत न पावहु सोभा ॥ ८ ॥

nahiṁ santōṣu ta puni kachu kahahū. jani risa rōki dusaha dukha sahaḥū. 7.
bīrabratī tumha dhīra achōbhā. gārī dēta na pāvahu sōbhā. 8.

If you are still not satisfied by what you have already said, then go ahead and say something more to satisfy your ego. Do not subject yourself to the agony of having to suppress your anger by not letting sufficient steam.

[In other words, you have already boasted so much about your self and have threatened to kill me. What else is left to be said? If there is still anything up in your mind, then let it out. If you suppress your anger it would torment you more, so it's better to vent your anger completely.]¹ (7)

You have assumed the role of a warrior, a hero who is resolute and not perturbed or disturbed by circumstances. It does not behove of you to abusive language for others.

[In other words, if you want to boast more about your achievements or marital exploits, then go ahead and enumerate them. But a brave and heroic warrior does not abuse his opponent like you have done by calling me names².] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280. Here, Parashuram has accepted that his chest is getting 'burnt' (i.e. he is very irritated, peeved, angry etc., causing him a virtual heart-burn) at not being able to punish Laxman.

²Parashuram has used a number of denigrating epithets for Laxman. He has called Laxman a "Satha", broadly meaning someone who is extremely stupid, foolish, pervert, wild and wicked (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 272); he has said that Laxman is a taint on his family, is in the jaws of death, is unruly, reckless, misbehaved and irreverent, is ignorant and unaware of the consequences of his actions and words, and that he would kill Laxman with his axe (Doha no. 271 and 272; Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 274).

In the next Doha no. 274, we shall read that Laxman gives another piece of advice to Parashuram that is more of a challenging taunt to him than a sincere advice to the sage to calm down. It further stoked the sage's anger.]

दो०. सूर समर करनी करहिं कहि न जनावहिं आपु।
बिद्यमान रन पाइ रिपु कायर कथहिं प्रतापु ॥ २७४ ॥

dōhā.

sūra samara karanī karahim kahi na janāvahim āpu.
bidyamāna rana pā'i ripu kāyara kathahim pratāpu. 274.

A true hero and warrior is one who does valiant deeds in a battle, and not merely boast about what they had done on some previous occasion by way of blatantly advertising their past achievements.

It is a sign of cowardice to boast about one's valour and past exploits when faced with an opponent in a battle-field.' (Doha no. 274)

[Note—This statement of Laxman is an open challenge to Parashuram. Laxman in effect tells the sage that if he is itching for a fight then it would be better to settle scores through a duel instead of using abuses and spitting fire and brimstone in anger. If Parashuram indeed has done such great deeds as he claims to have done, such as for instance eliminating all the kings by killing them with his battle-axe, then well and good, let him use it against Laxman to show that he is merely not boasting but has some substance in him.

Parashuram had become very haughty and arrogant of late; he had forgotten that he had been able to kill haughty, selfish and wild kings because it was a divine mandate from the Supreme Lord of creation to teach them a lesson. A king who does not fulfill his role as a merciful caretaker of his subject is worthy of elimination. The fact that Parashuram had killed only such kings and not 'all' kings is borne by the fact that good kings who followed the laws of Dharma by being righteous, noble and judicious in all their actions and deeds were not harmed by Parashuram. Examples abound—we have the Raghu dynasty to which king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram and Laxman, belonged,

then there was the Nimi dynasty to which Janak belonged. Further, we have already read about ‘thousands of kings who had tried to lift the bow’; they weren’t harmed by him.

In other words, it is obvious that Parashuram was exaggerating his exploits when he claimed that “he had eliminated all the kings from the surface of the earth many times over and handed the earth (land) to Brahmins” (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 272) to impress the assembly of kings and terrify Laxman into submission.

Therefore, Laxman wanted to hint to Parashuram that he has caught his cunning and he is ready to face the bull and catch it by its horns, because he knows that the bull is merely boasting and does not have the guts to charge at a wall as it is well aware that striking the wall would result in breaking of its horns, instead of harming the wall.

Obviously, this infuriated sage Parashuram further. This will be clear in the forthcoming verses. Refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 275 herein below. Now Parashuram could not find an excuse for his inability to face Laxman (or even Lord Ram for that matter though the Lord was very civil and polite with him) by saying that he has refrained from killing Laxman because he is a mere boy (a “Baalak”)—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

This episode of Parashuram being subjected to such public admonishment and rebuke has a subtle lesson: it is that if a person becomes unduly proud and haughty, if he thinks that he is the one who did this and that, if he is boastful of his achievements unmindful of the spiritual philosophy that it is the Lord God who controls every thing in this world and it is the Lord God who has made success possible for him, and that no one is superior to him in this creation, then one fine day he will meet his match and forced to bite the dust. The Supreme Lord of creation does not tolerate such negative attitudes, especially in a sage who is supposed to exhibit qualities just the opposite of what Parashuram had shown.

Then we must remember that Lord Ram, who is none else but the Supreme Lord himself in a human form, is present personally at the site where Parashuram is being given a dressing down. This means that the Lord, the Emperor of this creation, decided to teach Parashuram some lessons in his presence. As it would eventually turn out, Parashuram realised this fact, and would beg forgiveness from the Lord for whatever he had said and done, and then bow before the Lord and go to the forest to do Tapa (penances to atone for sins). Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Incidentally, we shall also read a little later that Parashuram had conceded that he is feeling powerless against Laxman. He says “I don’t know what has happened that I am unable to raise my arm and my battle-axe against Laxman”—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280.]

चौ०. तुझ तौ कालु हाँक जनु लावा । बार बार मोहि लागि बोलावा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

tumha tau kālu hāmka janu lāvā. bāra bāra mōhi lāgi bōlāvā. 1.

[Laxman continued—] ‘It appears that you (Parashuram) have ‘Kaal’ (the god of death) at your beck and call, and are repeatedly summoning him for my sake (in order to punish me and vent your anger at me).’

[Note—Parashuram has indeed threatened to kill Laxman repeatedly, five times to be precise, till this point of time—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Doha nos. 271 and 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that precede Doha no. 274.

So, Laxman scorns at and taunts the angry Parashuram that he has already threatened to kill him (Laxman) five times as if Laxman's death, his destiny, is in the hands of Parashuram. So, the latter should either go ahead with his threats or keep quiet!]

सुनत लखन के बचन कठोरा । परसु सुधारि धरेउ कर घोरा ॥ २ ॥

sunata lakhana kē bacana kaṭhōrā. parasu sudhāri dharē'u kara ghōrā. 2.

Hearing these highly scorching bold and harsh words of rebuke from Laxman, Parashuram was infuriated like a raging fire. He took the battle-axe in one of his hands and moved the other hand over it to find a proper place to grip it firmly, and then held it menacingly, with its sharp end pointing at Laxman. (2)

[Note—Parashuram is so angry that he has lost sense of everything. Parashuram could not think that Laxman must have some substance in him and some sort of powerful backing to support him that he has gathered so much courage to rebuke the sage.

The sage was so highly annoyed by Laxman and his persistent rebukes that he could not resist the temptation of drawing and wielding his favourite weapon, the battle-axe. He thought that Laxman thinks that he (Parashuram) is merely trying to threaten him so that he (Laxman) keeps quiet, and that he has no intention of actually harming Laxman. So Parashuram took out the axe and showed it to Laxman as a gesture to tell him that he actually means to carry out his threat to kill the latter if he does not behave himself. Enough was enough, and now Laxman should shut up.]

अब जनि देइ दोसु मोहि लोगू । कटुबादी बालकु बधजोगू ॥ ३ ॥

बाल बिलोकि बहुत मैं बाँचा । अब यहु मरनिहार भा साँचा ॥ ४ ॥

aba jani dē'i dōsu mōhi lōgū. kaṭubādī bālaku badhajōgū. 3.

bāla bilōki bahuta mair̥m bām̐cā. aba yahu maranihāra bhā sām̐cā. 4.

[Parashuram said vehemently and seething with anger—] 'Let no one blame me now because this boy who speaks so wickedly and irreverentially is indeed fit to be killed. (3)

I have spared him for quite some time because he is a young boy (a "Baalak")¹. But enough has happened, and it is true that it looks that he will die now.

[That is, I have spared him a lot because he is a child, but he has crossed all limits and has become aggressive. So he deserves severe punishment. Let no one in this assembly blame me for killing a boy because this fellow's behaviour is inviting death on his own self.] ' (4)

[Note—¹Parashuram was making a clown of himself. Just a few moments ago he had bragged as the one who has slayed infants and aborted embryos (refer: Doha no. 272), and now he says that he had spared Laxman because he was a child as he had done earlier in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The message in this episode is that anger makes a person lose all sense of wisdom and wit and turns him into a clown, making him irrational and a victim of self-contradictions and ridicule.]

कौसिक कहा छमिअ अपराधू । बाल दोष गुन गनहिं न साधू ॥ ५ ॥

kausika kahā chami'a aparādhū. bāla dōṣa guna ganahim na sādhu. 5.

[Seeing that things may go out of hand, and that this verbal spat between Laxman and Parashuram seems to be becoming more and more acrimonious and stretching beyond acceptable limits, the wise sage Vishwamitra intervened. He tried to calm the angry sage Parashuram and bring things under control before it's too late.]

Kausik (sage Vishwamitra) said to Parashuram, 'Excuse him (Laxman) for his misdemeanours and impertinent behaviour. Sainly people do not pay heed to either the faults or the virtues (i.e. demerits or merits) of children.' (5)

[Note—Vishwamitra has recalled Parashuram's own statement that the latter has spared Laxman till now because he was a "Baalak", a child, a young immature boy. Children are prone to be naughty and mischievous. When they grow up and face the world, they normally become more responsible. So a wise man neglects the behaviour of a child and pardons him for his misbehaviour. The child does not know what is correct and what is incorrect. Besides this normal trait in all children, a prince is more prone to be mischievous because of his pampered upbringing. Therefore, Parashuram should overlook how Laxman behaved with him, and move on.]

खर कुठार मैं अकरुन कोही । आगें अपराधी गुरुद्रोही ॥ ६ ॥

उतर देत छोड़ुँ बिनु मारें । केवल कौसिक सील तुझरें ॥ ७ ॥

न त एहि काटि कुठार कठोरें । गुरहि उरिन होतेउँ श्रम थोरें ॥ ८ ॥

khara kuṭhāra mairi akaruna kōhī. āgēr aparādhī gurudrōhī. 6.
utara dēta chōṛa'um' binu mārēr. kēvala kausika sīla tumhārēr. 7.
na ta ēhi kāṭi kuṭhāra kaṭhōrēr. gurahi urina hōtē'um' śrama thōrēr. 8.

[When sage Vishwamitra spoke to Parashuram, trying to pacify him, the latter replied—] 'My axe is sharpened and unforgiving. I have no mercy in my heart when I get angry. The fellow who has offended my Guru (Lord Shiva)¹ is standing before me (in a defiant mood). (6)

[Normally I must not forgive him because he has been instrumental in insulting Lord Shiva, my Guru, by being a part of the plan to break Shiva's bow. He has also offended me, and therefore deserves severest punishment.] But oh Kausik (Vishwamitra), I will still let him go (i.e. I won't harm Laxman) just because of your gracious manners and good nature (inspite of this fellow's irreverential behaviour towards me, and his mocking of me by answering back at me in such an insulting way). (7)

Otherwise, had it not been for you, I would have put my stern and cruel axe on his neck (i.e. I would have mercilessly chopped-off his head with my axe). By doing this, I would have paid-off my moral debt that I owe to my Guru (Shiva)². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is deemed to be sage Parashuram's Guru because the Lord is a revered diety and a deemed moral preceptor of all ascetics who practice Yoga and do Tapa.

²A disciple should protect the dignity and honour of his Guru at all times; it's moral duty that he owes his Guru. If anyone causes any insult to his Guru then the disciple must endeavour to punish the offender as soon as possible.

Now, in the present case, breaking of Lord Shiva's bow is an indirect insult of him. Since Parashuram holds Laxman equally guilty as Lord Ram for this sin, if he managed to punish Laxman in any severe manner then he would have symbolically repaid his moral debt to his Guru, Lord Shiva.

Parashuram should have known by now that Laxman was not guilty of actually breaking the bow of Shiva, and that it was broken by his elder brother Lord Ram. This is clearly indicated by Laxman himself in Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 272.

So, what was Laxman guilty of? One, Laxman was trying to defend Lord Ram and his breaking of the bow—refer: from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no.3 that precedes Doha no. 272. And two, Laxman has been continuously sneering at Parashuram and anwering him back for quite some time. This behaviour of Laxman had angered sage Parashuram more than his taking the side of his brother, Lord Ram, and defending him.]

दो०. गाधिसूनु कह हृदयँ हंसि मुनिहि हरिअरइ सूझ ।
अयमय खाँड़ न ऊखमय अजहुँ न बूझ अबूझ ॥ २७५ ॥

dōhā.

gādhisūnu kaha hṛdayam' han'si munihi hari'ara'i sūjha.
ayamaya khāmṛa na ūkhamaya ajahum' na būjha abūjha. 275.

Hearing the angry outburst of Parashuram, sage Vishwamitra, the son of Gaadhi ("gādhisūnu") smiled internally in his heart (at the delusions that have overtaken sage Parashuram's intellect and wisdom). He muttered to himself in an ironical tone that the sage (Parashuram) sees only greenery everywhere¹.

Vishwamitra thought to himself that Parashuram does not realise that this time he has to deal with a steel sword (a reference to Laxman) and not a soft stem of the sugar-cane (that one chews easily)². How ignorant and foolish is he! (Doha no. 275)

[Note—¹That is, Parashuram treats everyone in the same way. He thinks that Laxman and Lord Ram are merely ordinary princes whom Parashuram can push and shove in any way he likes. Seeing 'greenery everywhere' is a figure of speech meaning that Parashuram thinks that he can easily frighten Laxman like he has been frightening all other kings since a long time. He is so deluded that he thinks that the whole earth is full of green vegetation, and does not realise that there may be a dry patch of land somewhere where not even a shrub grows.

In other words, in his arrogance Parashuram forgets that he will not be able to subdue Laxman as he has been subduing countless other kings earlier.

²Parashuram repeatedly speaks of 'chopping-off the head of Laxman with his axe'. Does he not understand that his axe can cut a soft stem of the sugar-cane, but would

bounce off a steel sword? In this metaphor, Laxman is likened to a steel sword which the axe cannot cut through.

An interesting thing can be seen in this comparison. Both the blade of the axe and that of the sword are made of steel. Here it clearly implies that both sage Parashuram and Laxman are a perfect match for each other in their stern attitudes; both of them are equal in terms of showing anger, using uncouth words, threatening each other, and being fearless of the other. Laxman's taunting remarks with words soaked in sarcasm that follow herein below reinforce this view.

One very important observation can be made here. Sage Vishwamitra has not stopped Laxman even once during the entire oral spat with Parashuram. What can be the probable reason? Well, obviously it is this: Vishwamitra had realized that Laxman is made of a very stern stuff, and barring his brother Lord Ram he cares for no one else no matter whoso he may be so much so that he had no regrets at not even sparing king Janak by speaking harshly at him and rebuking him in full assembly inspite of the fact that Janak was the host king, a most gracious one who had shown great hospitality towards them, and also an aged one who was almost of the age of Laxman's own father king Dasrath—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

So Vishwamitra exercised prudence and kept quiet, being reluctant to say anything to Laxman to avoid any ugly situation should the latter forget to maintain decorum and decency of behaviour in his fit of anger and say something insulting to sage Vishwamitra in public which would be totally unacceptable to him, and in this scenario the things would go completely out of hand and control.]

चौ०. कहेउ लखन मुनि सीलु तुझारा । को नहिं जान बिदित संसारा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'u lakhana muni sīlu tumhārā. kō nahim jāna bidita sansārā. 1.

Laxman scorned at Parashuram and said in a taunting manner—‘Oh yes sage, who in this world is not aware of your civility and good manners! It is famous world-wide. (1)

[Note—The sarcasm is obvious and apparent. Parashuram has poured vitriol at Laxman and has called him names, has threatened him with death, has drawn his axe at him, has shouted and boasted of his achievements as a mass killer of kings who has not learnt to show mercy on anyone.

‘Under which criteria are these things considered polite and civil, who will regard the way Parashuram behaved as being good manners’—wondered Laxman when he made this taunt. Of course Parashuram is famous in the world, but everyone knows that his fame is based on all the wrong things.

Laxman is playing on Parashuram's own use of the word “Sheel” (meaning civil and good behaviour, politeness and good manners) in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 275 where Parashuram has praised the good virtues of sage Vishwamitra and said that it was because of the latter's patronage that he (Parashuram) is sparing Laxman.

There is of course no comparison between the “Sheel” of these two sages. While Vishwamitra was a calm, wise, tolerant and loving sage, Parashuram was an embodiment of recklessness, intolerance, wrath and anger.]

माता पितहि उरिन भए नीकें । गुर रिनु रहा सोचु बड़ जीकें ॥ २ ॥
 सो जनु हमरेहि माथे काढ़ा । दिन चलि गए ब्याज बड़ बाढ़ा ॥ ३ ॥
 अब आनिअ व्यवहरिआ बोली । तुरत देउँ मैं थैली खोली ॥ ४ ॥

mātā pitahi urina bha'e nīkēm. gura rinu rahā sōcu baṛa jīkēm. 2.
 sō janu hamarēhi māthē kāṛhā. dina cali ga'e byāja baṛa bāṛhā. 3.
 aba āni'a byavaharī'ā bōlī. turata dē'um' maim' thailī khōlī. 4.

You have fully paid the debt you owed to your parents (“mother and father”) and have washed your hands clean of this obligation¹, now what is left is the debt you owe to your Guru², and this obligation is agitating you, vexing your mind and making you worried. (2)

And it seems that we (Laxman and Lord Ram) had pledged to repay that burden of debt that you owed to your Guru, and you have come to force us to pay it. A lot of time has elapsed, increasing the burden of interest on the principal amount of the debt! (3)

So be it. Call the creditor³ here at once, and I will open my purse to repay his loan immediately (to free you of your moral obligation so that you can calm down your anger and get peace like a true sage, instead of going about threatening people with your axe). (4)

[Note—¹This fact that Parashuram had avenged his father's death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni, is lauded by Lord Ram himself in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 2.

The story of Parashuram ‘paying the debt that he owed to his parents’ refers to an incident in the sage's life which is narrated in brief below. No monetary transaction was involved; it is a symbolic way of saying that Parashuram had fulfilled the wishes of his father which every son ought to do, notwithstanding the propriety of his father's instructions. The story is this:

Once, Parashuram's father, sage Jamdagni, asked his wife Renuka (who was a daughter of king Prasenjit) to go and fetch water from the river. When she went there she saw a Gandharva couple frolicking around and indulging in love making. She began to watch this playful activity and was therefore late in bringing water for her husband, sage Jamdagni. The sage closed his eyes and used his mystical powers to become aware of what had happened. He did not approve of his wife watching a stranger couple making love, so he became angry. He wanted her killed. He had five sons—Rumanyavaan, Sushen, Vasu, Vishwavas and Parashuram. He summoned each of them, but the elder four sons refused to kill their mother. Jamdagni was extremely peeved, so he finally ordered Parashuram to kill Renuka as well as the four disobedient sons. Parashuram obeyed the instructions of his father and used his axe to kill all of them.

Jamdagni was very pleased with Parashuram and asked him to seek a boon. Then, the wise Parashuram requested his father for two boons—one, that all his four dead brothers and his mother be brought back to life, and two, that they should not remember who killed them. Jamdagni was delighted, and all were revived.

In this way, Parashuram not only fulfilled the wishes of his father but also helped his mother as well as his four brothers to overcome the bad effects of the sin they had

committed by undergoing severe punishment for it by getting themselves killed. But Parashuram did it in such a clever way that all of them emerged unscathed from the harshness of this punishment (of death) because they were all revived and did not remember what had happened to them.

Another version varies slightly in two minor details. One is that Renuka saw king Chitra-rath playing in the water with his wife, instead of seeing the Gandharva couple. And the second variation is that Parashuram had asked his obliged father an additional boon—that he has a long life and no one can ever defeat him in battle. The rest of the story is the same as the aforesaid version. This story is based in accordance with the version given in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Canto 116. The names of Parashuram's brothers are given in verse no. 2-4 and 10, while his boons are narrated in verse nos. 17-18.

Now, the above story outlines how Parashuram had obliged his father. Now let us see how he had obliged his mother. Once, the thousand-armed king known as 'Sahastraarjun' had taken away Jamdagni's all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu. Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahastraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun's kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram's mother grieved and wailed. When he came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahastraarjun's killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

In Mahabharat, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahastraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself. It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings who had committed no offence just to avenge his father's death at the hands Sahastraarjun, sage Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraivasu came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajya', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants (including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.' After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

This is how Parashuram overcame the moral debt that he owed to his parents: by obeying their commands without questioning them. First he obeyed his father by killing his mother on his instructions. Then he obeyed his mother by seeking revenge for her husband's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun by killing the latter as well as all the Kshatriya kings at random.

²Now, who was his 'Guru'? His Guru was Lord Shiva as the Lord is a deemed moral preceptor of all hermits, which sage Parashuram was. What was Parashuram's moral debt towards his Guru, Lord Shiva? It was to avenge the perceived insult that the breaking of the Lord Shiva's bow had caused by punishing the offender severely as he had done in the case of the Kshatriya kings who had killed his father. Breaking of Shiva's bow and killing of his father are equal offences because both these events involve violence.

So here Laxman hints at these major events in Parashuram's life when he says that the latter has freed himself from the obligation of repaying his parents debts because he had obeyed their commands. But his Guru's debt is still pending till he punishes Laxman and Lord Ram for breaking Shiva's bow.

³Laxman says that Parashuram should call the 'creditor' so that his loan can be paid. Who is the so-called 'creditor'? The creditor is his Guru, Lord Shiva, to whom Parashuram owes moral responsibility to uphold his dignity and punish anyone who insults his Guru even slightly and even by inference. So, Laxman asks him to summon Shiva. Laxman knows that Shiva loves Lord Ram and it was not possible to break the Lord's bow without his consent. In other words, Lord Ram could break the bow only because Shiva consented. Remember: When the bow was broken, all the gods—and the word "all" includes Lord Shiva—had assembled in the sky to shower flowers on Lord Ram, sing and play their musical instruments. (For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 265.)

A little later on we shall read that when Lord Ram was proceeding towards the marriage venue dressed as a groom, Lord Shiva was exhilarated beyond measure; Shiva was captivated by Lord Ram's enchanting image and thanked his stars that he had fifteen eyes (five faces with three eyes each)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 317.

Obviously therefore Lord Shiva was not at all offended by Ram breaking the bow, because otherwise he wouldn't have enjoyed and felt happy at Lord Ram's marriage, and wouldn't have joined in the celebrations either. After all, the marriage hinged on breaking of Shiva's bow, and how can one expect Shiva to celebrate the marriage of someone whom he held guilty of insulting him by breaking his bow?

These are clear indications that Shiva gave his consent to Lord Ram when the latter broke the bow. Therefore, the purported 'insult' of Lord Shiva by his bow being broken has no ground. But Parashuram was so overcome with anger and spite that he overlooked this fact. It was precisely for this reason that Laxman tells him to call the 'creditor', i.e. Lord Shiva, to ask him if anything is due to him. And if nothing is 'due'—in other words if Shiva says that he is not all offended by the breaking of this old and rusty bow which he himself had despised (because this bow had let Shiva down in his face-off with Vishnu, and it had been a cause of lot of bloodshed: see note of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 244)—then why is Parashuram jumping around angrily that his Guru has been insulted?

Laxman was confident that Parashuram would be further trounced for being so haughty and angry, characters totally unbecoming for a great sage and a hermit.]

सुनि कटु बचन कुठार सुधारा । हाय हाय सब सभा पुकारा ॥ ५ ॥

sunī kaṭu bacana kuṭhāra sudhārā. hāya hāya saba sabhā pukārā. 5.

Hearing these scornful and bitter words of Laxman, Parashuram moved his hands menacingly over his battle-axe, firmed his grip over it, as if about to strike. Seeing his grave posture, the assembly shouted in dismay—‘Alack, alack; Have mercy, have mercy’. (5)

[Note—Parashuram had wielded his battle-axe a number of times to threaten Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273.

Moving his hands over the handle and the flat part of the blade of the axe was a gesture that he is preparing the weapon to hit. When a combatant readied himself for combat, he wiped his weapon and moved his hands, i.e. the palms and the fingers, over it to test its cleanliness and remove any last traces of dust etc, as well as to check the sharpness of its edge.

A warrior was habituated to this practice. For instance, we shall read later on in the story that when Bharat approaches the hermitage of Lord Ram in Chitrakoot along with senior citizens of Ayodhya and an army in an attempt to persuade the Lord to return to Ayodhya, Lord Ram was sitting in the company of sages and hermits who lived in the forest. At that time, “Lord Ram was slowly revolving his bow and an arrow in his hands”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 239.

Meanwhile, we see here how a man, who has lost his wits due to anger, behaves. When a man of substance and authority threatens to punish someone for disobedience, he should actually punish the offender instead of just threatening to do so repeatedly, for otherwise he makes a mockery of himself. After one or two ineffective threats, his words lose their gravity and people start treating him as a clown. Thus, a powerful man should either keep quiet or go ahead with his threat of punishment by acting accordingly; a mere boastful threat without any follow-up action not only undermines a powerful man’s authority but also demeans him and makes him a butt of joke and ridicule.]

भृगुबर परसु देखावहु मोही । बिप्र बिचारि बचउँ नृपद्रोही ॥ ६ ॥

मिले न कबहुँ सुभट रन गाढ़े । द्विज देवता घरहि के बाढ़े ॥ ७ ॥

bhṛgubara parasu dēkhāvahu mōhī. bipra bicāri baca'um̐ nṛpadrōhī. 6.
milē na kabahum̐ subhaṭa rana gāṛhē. dvija dēvatā gharahi kē bāṛhē. 7.

Laxman struck back with a vengeance, retorting—‘Oh Bhrigubar (literally meaning an exalted member of sage Bhrigu’s family; here meaning Parashuram)! Why are you showing me your battle-axe repeatedly to threaten me?

But listen, you enemy of the kings! I am restraining myself from giving you a befitting reply (i.e. I am sparing you) just because you are a Brahmin (as we have been taught to show due respect to them). (6)

You have never met a brave warrior in a battle. [You have always met terrified kings who submitted before you humbly because you are a Brahmin. They never fought you because they thought that it would be improper to fight with and injure a Brahmin. This made you proud of your self as being invincible and being able to ride rough-shod over everyone else. Now your time is up; you have met your match in me.]

Brahmins and gods are accustomed to receive submission and get obedience, but it is confined to places where they have their unbridled authority such as their own domains (i.e. homes for Brahmins, and heaven in the case of gods)¹.

[But, remember, a battle-field is the domain of warriors, and not Brahmins and gods who are pampered beyond limits, making them boastful and haughty of their authority and powers. You had gone on the rampage, killing kings and princes in their homes, their cities and palaces, and never ever dared to face them in real battle conditions in a battle-field. Say, is it not unfair to kill someone who has submitted and is begging for mercy? And by killing submissive Kshatriya kings, you think you had done a big job or gained some great honour. Well, it is nothing short of cowardice. Now come, I challenge you for a real bit of battle, and I am a Kshatriya. Come, kill me if you can. Why are you merely raising the battle-axe in a hostile manner without being actually doing something about your threats just to prove your impotency?]' (7)

[Note—¹Verse no. 7 can be read as follows also—“Oh Vipra (Brahmin)! You have been treated with respect like a ‘god’ by householders (i.e. kings and princes), but you have not met someone in the environs of a battle-field. There you would have received a fair treatment that you deserve! Being accustomed to pampering and abject surrender by kings and other householders who showed respect to you like they would respect the gods they worshipped simply because you are Brahmin, you have become very arrogant and haughty. You have not met a true warrior till date, for he wouldn’t have bowed to you and surrendered to your threats. So you think that you are invincible and the lord of the world. Come, today I’ll show you the reality. Come, face me in battle. But don’t show this axe to me like a pretender.”

This statement of Laxman taunted Parashuram by saying in effect that he had shown his bravery by killing his mother and brothers at home. Then when he went around killing kings, they had submitted before him because he was a Brahmin whom everyone is taught to give due respect as one gives to a god. But that did not prove that Parashuram is a brave warrior—for he has never met someone in real battle conditions in a battle-field where his opponent refuses to submit before him and gives him a tit-for-tat reply. Perhaps if this had ever happened, Parashuram would have known how much wind was actually in his sail!]

अनुचित कहि सब लोग पुकारे । रघुपति सयनहिं लखनु नेवारे ॥ ८ ॥

anucita kahi saba lōga pukārē. raghupati sayanahim lakhanu nēvārē. 8.

All the people raised their voice at this rejoinder of Laxman, saying that it was not proper. [That is, the assembly objected to Laxman’s remark invoking gods and Brahmins in general. Laxman had unleashed a torrent of rebukes and sarcastic remarks against Parashuram that was slipping out of control.]

So, Raghupati (Lord Ram, the lord of the Raghu dynasty) signaled to Laxman with a gesture of his eyes to stop. (8)

[Note—It is interesting to note that till the time people did not object to Laxman’s verbal duel with Parashuram and his insinuations, Lord Ram had kept quiet. But when the Lord saw that the public opinion is turning against Laxman, he immediately intervened to stop him.

By stopping Laxman with a polite gesture of the eye, Lord Ram showed his love for him and that he did not want to offend or insult Laxman by scolding him for showing his

bad temper in public and insulting sage Parashuram. After all, Parashuram deserved this dressing-down because he had cultivated a bad habit of becoming angry and boasting.

Besides this, Lord Ram also showed that he respected the views of the people, for as soon as he discovered that the people are disapproving of Laxman's behaviour, he instantly got the latter stopped.

Refer Doha no. 276 herein below.]

दो०. लखन उतर आहुति सरिस भृगुबर कोपु कृसानु ।
बढ़त देखि जल सम बचन बोले रघुकुलभानु ॥ २७६ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana utara āhuti sarisa bhr̥gubara kōpu kṛsānu.
baṛhata dēkhi jala sama bacana bōlē raghukulabhānu. 276.

Laxman's replies and rejoinders were like offering of liquid clarified butter as oblation into the fire pit of a sacrifice, sage Parashuram's anger was like the raging fire, and when Lord Ram, who was like a 'sun' in the dynasty of king Raghu, saw that the fire was getting out of control (as it would go on becoming wilder and more fierce without subsiding or cooling off if more oblations or fuel was added to it by way of Laxman retorting to Parashuram's angry tirade and the latter getting wilder and angrier at Laxman's boldness, fearlessness and irreverential behaviour), he spoke polite and soothing words as if to pour water¹ to douse this fire. (Doha no. 276)

[Note—¹The comparison is very apt. The 'sun' is responsible for producing rain because it first helps in the evaporation of water from oceans and seas. This evaporated water vapour transforms into a cloud which then pours 'rain water' on the 'heated' earth below.

Lord Ram has a 'dark' complexion, which is also the colour of rain-bearing clouds.

The idea is that when the people started feeling the heat of Laxman's and Parashuram's anger and they feared that this verbal duel between the two might turn ugly and result in open battle, like the 'heat on earth that torments its inhabitants', Lord Ram metaphorically poured 'rain water' to calm it down by speaking politely and humbly so that the anger of sage Parashuram, which was like a raging fire, would subside. Meanwhile, he stopped Laxman from adding more fuel to this fire by keeping quiet.]

चौ०. नाथ करहु बालक पर छोहू । सूध दूधमुख करिअ न कोहू ॥ १ ॥
जौं पै प्रभु प्रभाउ कछु जाना । तौ कि बराबरि करत अयाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nātha karahu bālaka para chōhū. sūdha dūdhamukha kari'a na kōhū. 1.
jaur̥m pai prabhu prabhā'u kachu jānā. tau ki barābari karata ayānā. 2.

[Lord Ram tried to assuage sage Parashuram's ruffled feelings and hurt ego by using a soothing balm of polite words, requesting him to forgive Laxman and neglect his rash

behaviour as the latter was merely a child and does not have any experience of interacting with a great personality of Parashuram's stature. Indeed it is expected that elders should overlook the mischief created by inexperienced youngsters.]

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Oh Lord! Be gracious upon this child¹; have mercy on him. He is simple-hearted (i.e. he has no real intention of insulting you or hurting your ego and prestige). He is literally so young that he still drinks milk for survival². So you must not become angry on him. (1)

Say, if he had any inkling of your glories and achievements, would he have imagined or thought of ever comparing himself with you, and behaving the way he did?

[He is ignorant of everything, because as I have told you and as you have yourself acknowledged, he is still a ‘child’. He is unaware of your true potentials and prowess. He does not know your background or your stupendous achievements, like your doing severe Tapa, your practicing Yoga, and performing various sacrifices. He does not know the astounding mystical powers you possess. He thinks that you are merely some ordinary sage or hermit who is prone to becoming angry at trifles, and when you become angry you lose control over your senses.

Being a prince, Laxman is not accustomed to anyone threatening him, of boasting in front of him. But he does not know the reality about you. That is why he has answered back at you and behaved such irreverentially with you. Yes indeed, if he had known of your great mystical powers, your martial achievements, your spiritual abilities and your exalted lineage, he certainly wouldn't have dared talk with you the way he did.

He was misled by your physical appearance and behaviour. You hold fierce weapons such as a battle-axe, a bow and arrows. Then, you started shouting and threatening the moment you came here. These are not the characteristics of sages and hermits. So this boy thought that you are some warrior, and as is the wont of brave princes who are taught not to be cowed down by adversaries, he stood up against you.

But then, as I've told you, he is inexperienced, and yet a child. You have also accepted this fact that he is child, a “Baalak”. Oh holy sage, fighting with children never gives any honour to an adult, especially to a sage of your stature. By quarrelling with him you are only inviting ridicule on yourself.

Laxman can be excused for his misdemeanours because he is a child, but how will you excuse yourself for your ruckus and boastful behaviour?] (2)

[Note—¹Parashuram has himself conceded that Laxman is a ‘child’, a “Baalak”. He has also said that he spares Laxman just because he is a child. Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272. So Lord Ram has wisely reminded the sage of his own statement which he can't deny; the sage can't say now that Laxman is not a child.

²The Lord implied that a warrior should feel ashamed of himself by fighting with a child who still has not learnt how to eat solid food, who still drinks his mother's milk. It is merely in a literal sense that it is said that “Laxman still has milk in his mouth”. It is observed that children who are very young drink a lot of milk which is their staple food, and thus their mouths smell of milk. It is a figure of speech to mean that the person concerned has not grown up mentally; he still acts, behaves and thinks like a child though he may have grown up in physical age.

Elders also refer to their beloved younger ones as still being a child; it shows that they have great affection for them like a father would have for his child, and therefore are ready to forgive or overlook their misdemeanours.]

जौं लरिका कछु अचगरि करहीं । गुर पितु मातु मोद मन भरहीं ॥ ३ ॥
करिअ कृपा सिसु सेवक जानी । तुह सम सील धीर मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ४ ॥

jaum̐ larikā kachu acagari karahīm̐. gura pitu mātū mōda mana bharahīm̐. 3.
kari'a kṛpā sisu sēvaka jānī. tumha sama sīla dhīra muni gyānī. 4.

If a child plays some kind of prank or talks in a playful and nonsensical way as is the wont of children, his elders, such as his teacher and parents (“guru, pitu, matu”), take it lightly and are filled with joy (instead of getting annoyed and taking umbrage at the child’s behaviour). [In other words, you are a senior sage, and for you he is like a child. You have yourself said it that you are restraining yourself because Laxman is a mere child or a “Baalak”—chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272. You must understand that some children are mischievous, and therefore you must neglect his behaviour and calm your anger down.] (3)

Treating him as a child and a humble servant (of sages and hermits), have compassion and mercy on him. You (being an exalted sage and hermit) have the auspicious virtues of equanimity, good manners, forbearance and patience; you are a self-realised sage. [So you must behave like one, and should not be sucked into an unpleasant confrontation with a child because it would undermine your exalted stature.]¹ (4)

[Note—Lord Ram has talked very cleverly and diplomatically. On the one hand he has defended Laxman’s behaviour, and on the other hand he has politely told sage Parashuram that his behaviour does not suit him.

It will be noted here that Parashuram had become so stupid in his anger that he took Lord Ram’s statement that “Laxman does not know about the sage’s glories and achievements” so literally that he forgot that he had already boasted of them a while ago—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

So, Parashuram decided to make more boast of his famous deeds. He will brag about himself again in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

¹We shall read in a while that Lord Ram has to repeat this plea once again when Laxman started annoying sage Parashuram once again. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 279 below.]

राम बचन सुनि कछुक जुड़ाने । कहि कछु लखनु बहुरि मुसुकाने ॥ ५ ॥

rāma bacana suni kachuka juṛānē. kahi kachu lakhanu bahuri musukānē. 5.

Parashuram felt a bit reassured and comforted by the pleasant and soothing words of Lord Ram¹.

But his peace was short-lived as Laxman smiled sarcastically once again, mocking the sage even as he made some new taunting and disparaging remarks targeting him (that spited sage Parashuram, and further stoked his anger and vehemence)². (5)

[Note—¹Parashuram was burning with anger and spite. So Lord Ram’s soothing words calmed him down “a bit”. When the earth has been scorched by the heat of summer, then it is observed that the first round of rains do not cool it down completely. In fact, if the

rain is not sufficient, the heat is felt more intensely than how it was felt previously because the little amount of rain-water that falls cannot cool the heated surface of the earth, but, instead, it itself turns hot as soon as it touches the earth's surface.

It is like sprinkling some cold water on a hot iron plate; it begins to sputter and hiss, and emanates heat. It is also well known that one gets scalded if one comes in direct contact with steam escaping from the spout of a kettle. So, insufficient rain creates more heat than cooling down the earth. Often it becomes stifling hot after the first shower of rain during severe summer than what one had experienced before the rain had come.

In other words, sage Parashuram was beginning to get calmer and regain control over himself when Lord Ram spoke to him politely, seeking forgiveness and expecting a compassionate attitude. But as it happened, Laxman smiled sarcastically once again, uttering some caustic words which stoked the sage's anger once again.

Laxman wanted to ensure, as it were, that the sage vents his full steam here and now so that when later on he goes to do Tapa (austerity and penances) or Yoga (meditation), he will be able to do it properly with a calm head! Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

²Laxman was at it again. He did not like his brother, Lord Ram, surrendering to this haughty and boastful sage, trying to pacify him by asking for forgiveness on Laxman's behalf. Laxman wanted to teach this arrogant sage a lesson of his life, but his elder brother, whom he revered so much, was pleading and submitting before Parashuram. This did not go down well with Laxman.

Later on in the story we shall read other incidents also where Laxman has not approved of Lord Ram's dealing with his adversaries in a polite manner. For instance—

(i) When Bharat came to the forest with his army and citizens of Ayodhya in an attempt to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, Laxman apprehended that Bharat had some ill intentions; he also did not approve of Ram's welcoming him with an open arm. So, Laxman stood up to fight with Bharat. Lord Ram had then calmed him down. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 232.

(ii) When the ocean was not providing a passage to Lord Ram's army to cross over to Lanka, the Lord had first prayed to the ocean to let him go, but finally he got angry. The Lord pulled out his arrow to dry the ocean. This was liked by Laxman. In other words, Laxman had not approved of Lord Ram begging the ocean to give him a passage, but preferred strong action. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 58.

In essence, Laxman did not approve that Lord Ram should plead before sage Parashuram to either excuse Laxman or even himself for breaking the bow. So he could not resist himself and said something more that caused further irritation to the sage. This will be clear in the following verses.

Now, what did Laxman say this time? It is not clear from the text. So we can make assumption. Perhaps he said, "You (Parashuram) is known as a killer of your mother and brother at the instructions of your father; you are known as a killer of innocent kings to please your mother; you are famous as the killer of unborn babies with your cruel axe. Well, this is the great fame you have. How nice of you indeed; how praise-worthy are your deeds indeed!" Obviously, this sent the sage into a fit of anger like he probably never had experienced in his life earlier.]

हँसत देखि नख सिख रिस ब्यापी । राम तोर भ्राता बड़ पापी ॥ ६ ॥

गौर सरीर स्याम मन माहीं । कालकूटमुख पयमुख नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥

सहज टेढ़ अनुहरइ न तोही । नीचु मीचु सम देख न मोही ॥ ८ ॥

hamṣata dēkhi nakha sikha risa byāpī. rāma tōra bhrātā baṛa pāpī. 6.
gaura sarīra syāma mana māhīm. kālakūṭamukha payamukha nāhīm. 7.
sahaja ṭērha anuhara'i na tōhī. nīcu mīcu sama dēkha na mōhī. 8.

When Parashuram saw Laxman sneering at him, anger pervaded his entire being. Rage surged within his body, flushing him with anger from the tip of his toe-nail to the top of his head.

Thus, the infuriated sage turned to Lord Ram and said—‘Ram, your brother is very sinful. [That is, he is not only insulting towards me but is also seemingly defying you. Look, while you are pleading with me to excuse him for being a child, and while you behave so politely with me, this fellow does not even understand that if his elder brother wishes to bring the issue to rest than he should not do anything to raise dead corpses again, and that if his elder brother is showing so much respect to me than there must be some reason. He should have withdrawn by now, but is very defiant. He is hell-bent on insulting me, and probably he also gives a damn to you.

Well, this is exactly what he is doing by sneering at me and uttering nonsense once again even while you have not finished speaking. For that matter, who knows he may be sneering at your words, and not at me. What could be more impertinent and sinful than this?]

(6)
He may be fair in complexion (i.e. appears to be good), but his heart is very dark (i.e. internally he is pervert and full of spite). He has poison in his mouth, and not milk (as you claim him to be—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 277 herein above). (7)

Look, he is a very wicked, impolite and impertinent fellow. He is not like you; he does not follow your example. This rascal treats me with utter contempt, and hates me like one hates death.’ (8)

[Note—We have read earlier that when Parashuram could not bear Laxman’s heat, he had turned to sage Vishwamitra in order to find an escape route. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 274. At that time also, Laxman has shot back with caustic comments. Refer: from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 274—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 275.

Once again, when things seemed to go out of hand, sage Vishwamitra had intervened and requested Parashuram to excuse Laxman as elders and wise men do not pay heed to ignorant children. Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 275. And once again, Laxman retorted boldly, taunting Parashuram with very caustic comments. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 276.

The same thing is repeated here. Lord Ram is trying to pacify the angry sage Parashuram, and Laxman goes on adding fuel to the fire of sage’s anger.]

दो०. लखन कहेउ हँसि सुनहु मुनि क्रोधु पाप कर मूल ।
जेहि बस जन अनुचित करहिं चरहिं बिस्व प्रतिकूल ॥ २७७ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana kahē'u ham̐si sunahu muni krōdhu pāpa kara mūla.
jēhi basa jana anucita karahim̐ carahim̐ bisva pratikūla. 277.

Laxman smiled wryly and advised Parashuram mockingly—‘Oh sage, anger is at the root of all sins. A living being commits errors and does wrong things under its spell. It is anger that drives them against the whole world, making them enemies of everyone. [Anger creates unnecessary ill-will and hatred that robs one of his peace of mind. It generates animosity that leads to a feeling of insecurity because an angry man begins to look at others with suspicion and scepticism.] (Doha no. 277)

[Note—This is in response to Parashuram telling Lord Ram that Laxman is a great sinner in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes this Doha no. 277. So Laxman tells sage Parashuram that it is the latter who is a sinner because he has become inappropriately angry and vengeful for a minor issue such as the breaking of an old and creaking bow, and not Laxman who is calm and smiling.

It is Parashuram who is angry, and not Laxman. It is an established doctrine that anger is a bad thing; a man loses his wisdom, his mental bearing and rationality when he becomes angry. An angry man's actions cause him more harm than good. He creates enemies all around him, and no one comes forward to help him in his times of need. This makes life hell for an angry man. Besides this aspect, he acquires infamy and ill-will.

Laxman means that Parashuram is a sage of high repute. All his religious merits and spiritual achievements are turned into a naught by his anger. Whatever mystical powers he manages to gather by doing severe Tapa and Yoga are dissipated and neutralized by his becoming angry.

This Doha summarizing the bad effects of anger is a message for all of us—that we must endeavour to overcome our anger if we want to have peace and happiness in our lives. The ill effects of anger are summarised in Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 55, verse nos. 5-6 also.

This said, we shall note below that Laxman has taken a cue from his elder brother Lord Ram and has changed his tone of speaking. Instead of using scorching words, he now talks mildly and seeks forgiveness from sage Parashuram. He advises the sage that instead of fretting and fuming in anger at breaking of Lord Shiva's bow, it will be wiser to plan as how to undo the damage that has already been done by calling some expert craftsman and getting the bow repaired. Refer: Chaupai line no. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278 below.

But even while Laxman's words seemed to be polite, his general expressions were no less than being hostile and his tone of speech smacked of taunting sage Parashuram. So, instead of getting calmed down, Parashuram became more furious. This will be clear when we read Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 278 herein below.]

चौ०. मैं तुझार अनुचर मुनिराया । परिहरि कोपु करिअ अब दाया ॥ १ ॥
टूट चाप नहिं जुरिहि रिसाने । बैठिअ होइहिं पाय पिराने ॥ २ ॥
जौं अति प्रिय तौ करिअ उपाई । जोरिअ कोउ बड़ गुनी बोलाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥m tumhāra anucara munirāyā. parihari kōpu kari'a aba dāyā. 1.
 ṭūṭa cāpa nahir̥m jurihi risānē. baithi'a hō'ihir̥m pāya pirānē. 2.
 jaur̥m ati priya tau kari'a upā'ī. jōri'a kō'u baṛa gunī bōlā'ī. 3.

I (Laxman) am your “Anuchar”, meaning that I am junior to you, am like one of your followers, a subordinate and a servitor of yours¹. Abandon your anger and have mercy upon me now. (1)

The broken bow would not be mended by getting angry; it needs repair. Please sit down; your legs must be tired and aching.² (2)

If this bow is so dear to you (and its breaking has offended you so much), then it is nary a problem because we can find out a practical way to get it repaired by summoning some expert craftsman who can do the job.’ (3)

[Note—On the face of it, Laxman’s words were welcoming, polite and soothing. He seems to be trying to comfort the angry sage and help him to find a solution of the vexed problem that has caused him so much anger in the first place, and the problem still exists. Getting angry and fighting won’t help. The real solution to this perplexing problem is to get an expert to mend the broken bow and restore it to its original state.

¹By saying that he was an “Anuchar” of sage Parashuram, Laxman means that since he is born as a Kshatriya prince, he will always remain submissive to a person who is born in the Brahmin race. Brahmins are always shown great respect by Kshatriya kings; the latter are always afraid of and submissive to the former. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 284.

So Laxman meant that the sage is unnecessarily getting worked-up as he (Laxman) has no intention of either insulting the sage or hurting him. The way he reacted was because the sage himself behaved in a manner unfit for a Brahmin—he became angry, shouted at him, and called him names. Then, the sage wielded weapons, such as an axe, a bow and arrows, which a Brahmin is not supposed to. The sage boasted about the way he went about killing kings, something abhorable to the extreme and completely at odds with the nature of a Brahmin who is supposed to be forgiving and compassionate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Anger only harms the person who exhibits this negative character, and no one else; anger burns his inner self like the fire burns the external body—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 39.

A sage and a saintly person must have a calm and compassionate temperament; he must show mercy towards the humble and those who are junior to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Parashuram has exhibited none of these auspicious virtues of a Brahmin or a sage. Then, Laxman seems to subtly ask him, how can he expect respect and politeness from the former?

Lord Ram uses the same logic later on when Parashuram was unwilling to relent, and the Lord had to assume a stern posture to subdue him at last. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 284.

Hence, in essence, what Laxman said to Parashuram in these verses was a sort of subtle admonishment of the latter for his bad behaviour that does not behove of a good Brahmin and an exalted sage of Parashuram’s stature. It gives a bad name also to his ancestors. Laxman indirectly told the sage that he should first see the way he has behaved before accusing the former of any misdemeanour.

²Laxman told Parashuram that merely getting angry would provide no solution. The main issue at stake is the broken bow, and so we must direct our attention to it instead of wasting time on pouring vitriol on each other.

Parashuram must have been exhausted by now, because, first, he had come a long way from the shores of the southern ocean, and second, he was angry, and anger saps one's energy more than anything else. So his legs must be tired; he must sit down to relax a bit. Meanwhile, they will call some expert craftsman and get the bow repaired.]

बोलत लखनहिं जनकु डेराहीं । मष्ट करहु अनुचित भल नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥
थर थर काँपहिं पुर नर नारी । छोट कुमार खोट बड़ भारी ॥ ५ ॥

bōlata lakhanahim janaku dērāhīm. maṣṭa karahu anucita bhala nāhīm. 4.
thara thara kām̐pahim pura nara nārī. chōṭa kumāra khōṭa baṛa bhārī. 5.

As Laxman spoke, king Janak was feeling uneasy and afraid. [Because he feared that Laxman would suddenly say something which would ignite Parashuram's wrath, and the latter may wreak vengeance upon him.]

So Janak said softly, 'Stop; it is not good to speak unnecessarily; it is wrong to provoke things.'¹ (4)

The men and women folk of the city (who had assembled at the venue to witness the bow-breaking ceremony) shivered in anticipation of some disastrous consequences (of Laxman's persistence with speaking up to the angry sage Parashuram).

They muttered amongst themselves that the younger of the two princes is indeed very naughty². (5)

[Note—¹Laxman had already annoyed sage Parashuram, and the latter loathed the former. Anything Laxman said, no matter how harmless and innocent, the angry sage would take it in the wrong sense. It is to be noted here that Lord Ram has said almost the same thing as what Laxman has said in the above verses. Compare what Lord Ram said in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277, with what Laxman said in Doha no. 277—to Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

But the difference is apparent in Doha no. 277 which says that Laxman 'smiled'. Of course this smile was less of a gesture of politeness, and more in the nature of a sneer. Janak was an experienced king; he could feel the heat of the fire of anger in Parashuram that Laxman's body language was generating.

So, the king muttered that enough was enough, and now Laxman must be stopped.

²Earlier also, the citizens had disapproved of the way Laxman had answered sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 276.]

भृगुपति सुनि सुनि निरभय बानी । रिस तन जरइ होइ बल हानी ॥ ६ ॥
बोले रामहि देइ निहोरा । बचउँ बिचारि बंधु लघु तोरा ॥ ७ ॥
मनु मलीन तनु सुंदर कैसें । बिष रस भरा कनक घटु जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

bhrgupati suni suni nirabhaya bānī. risa tana jara'i hō'i bala hānī. 6.
bōlē rāmahi dē'i nihōrā. baca'um' bicāri bandhu laghu tōrā. 7.

manu malīna tanu sundara kaisēm. biṣa rasa bharā kanaka ghaṭu jaisēm. 8.

As Bhrigupati (the chief of the Bhrigu's race; sage Parashuram) continued to hear Laxman's fearless and bold words, his body kept literally burning with anger, resulting in his losing his energy and strength¹. (6)

[Unable or unwilling to talk with Laxman and face the latter—] Parashuram turned to Lord Ram and said with complaint in his voice—‘I am sparing this fellow because I know that he is your younger brother. [Otherwise, I would have punished him most severely. But since you are civil and cultured, and you have shown respect to me, I am inclined to overlook as this boy's mischief in deference to your request to forgive him—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277.] (7)

He has a pervert and dark heart. I wonder how he has got such a charming body. It is like having a harsh poison in a golden pitcher².’ (8)

[Note—¹This verse teaches us the bad effects of anger. Anger burns one's strength, vitality and energy so much so that when the anger subsides, the person is left exhausted and worn out as if he has done some greatly strenuous work.

In the present context we shall see that by and by the sage lost all his stamina and vigour. A stage would come when he felt like a punctured balloon.

Now, if we examine this episode closely in the context of this principle that one is drained of his energy and vitality by becoming angry, we discover that Laxman's verbal duel with Parashuram was part of a strategy. It caused the sage to become wild and excessively angry, shouting, threatening and gesticulating violently, thereby dissipating all his reserve of strength and energy, making him incapable to actually fight in a battle.

Eventually, therefore, when Lord Ram would face him and crack the whip in the final showdown, the sage would be like a deflated balloon. The same Parashuram who had boasted of the strength of his arms and his battle-axe would submit in a docile manner as if he had been drugged. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

²Here, Laxman is compared to the golden pitcher because of his fair complexion, and his nature, temper and behaviour, his way of speaking in a scorching manner, to the poison stored in the golden vessel.]

दो०. सुनि लछिमन बिहसे बहुरि नयन तरेरे राम ।

गुर समीप गवने सकुचि परिहरि बानी बाम ॥ २७८ ॥

dōhā.

sunī lachimāna bihasē bahuri nayana tarērē rāma.

gura samīpa gavanē sakuci parihari bānī bāma. 278.

Hearing these words of sage Parashuram, Laxman smiled in a teasing manner once again. [But now he was transgressing limits of decent behaviour, and the assembly was not taking the developments lightly. Even king Janak disapproved of Laxman's behaviour as much as the rest of the citizens. So, Lord Ram wished to put a stop to it before the thing became too nasty. Hence—] Lord Ram intervened and looked at Laxman sternly from the corner of his eyes (signaling the latter to behave himself and call it quits).

At this warning from the Lord, Laxman stopped talking in a bold and fearless manner that was irritating sage Parashuram. He then withdrew himself and abashedly went close to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). (Doha no. 278)

[Note—Lord Ram could sense that the people as well as their host, king Janak, were annoyed at Laxman's behaviour. Being the elder brother it was his duty to rein-in his younger sibling if the latter was doing something wrong in the eyes of the world.

When Lord Ram looked sternly at Laxman and hinted him to stop with a winking gesture from the corner of his eyes and furrowed eyebrows, Laxman became 'abashed' because he realized that his actions had embarrassed his beloved brother. Laxman had never intended to do anything that would put Lord Ram in a sticky situation, but unwittingly he had done exactly that. So he felt ashamed of himself, and shyly withdrew to go to the place where sage Vishwamitra was sitting.

One important reason of Laxman's withdrawing to a spot near sage Vishwamitra was that he would be very safe there should things go out of hand and Parashuram becomes determined to hit him. This is because sage Vishwamitra was not less powerful than Parashuram, and the latter would have to think a thousand times to harm someone who was protected by Vishwamitra. So, Laxman was safer near sage Vishwamitra than at any other place.

Normally he should have stood with Lord Ram to give him moral support and help him if things became bad. But Laxman was sure that Lord Ram was competent to look after himself.

Another reason of moving away from the spot of the confrontation was that his (Laxman's) presence at the side of Lord Ram would never have allowed sage Parashuram to calm down, because his mere sight infuriated the sage, stoking his anger further.

Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 279 along with their appended notes herein below.]

चौ०. अति बिनीत मृदु सीतल बानी । बोले रामु जोरि जुग पानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ati binīta mṛdu sītala bānī. bōlē rāmu jōri juga pānī. 1.

Lord Ram spoke in a voice that was polite, sweet and pleasant, using words that were cool, soothing and comforting. He also brought together his hands and joined his palms in his front as a gesture of polite request and submission before the angry sage. (1)

[Note—After signalling Laxman to withdraw from confrontation with the gesture of his eyes, Lord Ram spoke very politely to sage Parashuram. He will ask the sage to excuse his younger brother because all children are prone to commit mistakes and are usually naughty—refer the verses that follow below.

This is the second time however that Lord Ram has had to intervene and try to calm down the angry sage. The first occasion was in Doha no. 276—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277.]

सुनहु नाथ तुज सहज सुजाना । बालक बचनु करिअ नहिं काना ॥ २ ॥

बरै बालकु एकु सुभाऊ । इन्हहि न संत बिदूषहिं काऊ ॥ ३ ॥

sunahu nātha tumha sahaja sujānā. bālaka bacanu kari'a nahiṃ kānā. 2.
bararai bālaku ēku subhā'ū. inhahi na santa bidūṣahiṃ kā'ū. 3.

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Listen oh Lord! You are inherently wise and very learned. You must not give your ears (i.e. pay attention to) the words of a boy. (2)

The reason being that wasps (“bararai”)^{1*} and boys (“bālaku”) are of the same nature. [Just as a wasp has the habit to sting anyone who touches it even inadvertently, without meaning any harm to it, a boy too has the habit to respond in an irritating manner to anyone who provokes him. So, it is always better to keep a safe distance with a wasp as well as a child because their behaviour is very unpredictable, they are very quick in their response without any thought of its long-term effects, and they tend to show no respect to their offender.]

Therefore, those who are wise and saintly never accuse them or find fault with them because it is their natural, inborn habit. [A wise man knows that a wasp would sting if touched, and so if the insect stings and causes pain to him, he would not feel angry. Rather, he would find a remedy for the burning and the swelling caused by the sting and take precaution to avoid that wasp in future. Similarly, a wise man knows that it makes no sense in accusing a naughty child for its demeanours because it is its natural habit; the child’s responses are always unpredictable because it does not know how to interact with others. Hence, it is futile in getting angry at their behaviour. A wise man would make a fool out of himself at taking a child seriously as he would take the response from an adult.] (3)

{*The word “bararai” also means one who is out of one’s mind; one who behaves like a mad person; a person who does not know how to speak, behave and do anything in a proper way. In other words, a boy of young age or a child does not know what to say to whom, how to behave decently with others, and what to do and what not to. There is not much of a difference between a child and a mad man—the behaviour of both of them is not only irrational, unpredictable and erratic but also, more often than not, it is stinging and irritating, and a constant cause of worry and annoyance for the other person, just like being near to a wasp.

If we take this meaning into consideration, then verse no. 3 should be read as follows—“A mad man and a child have the same nature and mental state. A wise and intelligent man should not pay any attention to them (because both act irrationally, erratically and unpredictably; their behaviour makes no sense and so they should be completely neglected).”}

[Note—Lord Ram has invoked sage Parashuram’s own admission that Laxman is a boy (“bālaku”—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272) to request him not to take the latter’s behaviour seriously and become annoyed; it is not worth it.

¹The Lord has compared Laxman’s words with the vicious sting of a wasp (“Barrai”). In other words, the Lord could judge the mood of the sage and the way he has felt exceedingly hurt by Laxman’s words which had stung the sage so viciously that his entire being was shaken as if a wasp had bitten him.

This is why verse no. 1 above says Lord Ram spoke to Parashuram with words that were cool, soothing and comforting as if the Lord was applying a balm on the sage’s ruffled ego which was wounded by Laxman’s harsh words, just like a man applies an ointment on the wound created by a wasp’s sting.]

तेहिं नाहीं कछु काज बिगारा । अपराधी मैं नाथ तुझारा ॥ ४ ॥

कृपा कोपु बधु बँधब गोसाईं । मो पर करिअ दास की नाई ॥ ५ ॥

tēhiṁ nāhiṁ kachu kāja bigārā. aparādhī maim nātha tumhārā. 4.
krpā kōpu badhu bam̐dhaba gōsā'īm. mō para kari'a dāsa kī nā'īm. 5.

Besides this, he (Laxman) has not done any harm to anyone. In fact, it is me whom you should treat as the one who has offended you; it is me who is the culprit (because it is me who has broken the bow, the offence which has angered you so much). (4)

Treating me as one of your humble servants or someone who has submitted himself before you, you can decide to have mercy upon me (to show that you are highly gracious and fit to be called an exalted sage), or you can decide to wreak your anger at me by killing me or putting me in shackles (as punishment for the offence that I have done to you by breaking the bow). (5)

[Note—That is, you must first keep in mind that Laxman is not the real offender; it's me. So, in whatever way you want to deal with the offender, you should deal with me. But at the same time, before deciding on your course of action, you must keep in mind that I have submitted myself before you, and being an exalted sage and a learned Brahmin of high pedigree because you belong to the race owing its origin to the renowned sage Bhṛigu, you must watch your actions. The world is closely watching you.

The world would forgive Laxman because, as I have said, children are like mad men or wasps whom a wise man pays no attention to, but you are a grown-up and responsible sage, an acclaimed hermit. You can't find excuses for your misdemeanours, especially when I have surrendered before you. A sage gains honour in forgiveness, and not in bloodshed or seeking revenge. So be careful with how you decide to deal with my error. The best course of action for you would be to have mercy upon me and forgive me. But should you decide to vent your anger at me, you can either kill me as you have been threatening all along, or put me in shackles like a prisoner to punish me for breaking the bow.

Whatever you do, do it with me. Why involve Laxman who is not guilty of any crime?]

कहिअ बेगि जेहि बिधि रिस जाई । मुनिनायक सोइ करौं उपाई ॥ ६ ॥

kahi'a bēgi jēhi bidhi risa jā'ī. munināyaka sō'i karaum upā'ī. 6.

Meanwhile, oh the leader of sages ("Muni-naayak"), tell me quickly how your anger would subside, and I will endeavour to find a solution to it. (6)

[Note—Lord Ram has played his cards well, and diplomatically. He has first given Parashuram a choice of either showing mercy that a sage is expected to show, or exhibiting cruelty by killing or shackling him that is never expected from a sage. Then Lord Ram addresses him as a "leader of sages", or someone who must lead by example how a sage acts and responds to any given unfortunate situation, especially when the offending person is seeking forgiveness with all the humility he can command, and is also ready to undo the damage.

Any reckless action of revenge that sage Parashuram may be inclined to take would only give him a bad name, and would not serve his purpose of getting the bow repaired.

Both Laxman and Lord Ram have expressed their desire that they wish to surrender before sage Parashuram; both have asked for forgiveness independently so that the angry sage could overcome his anger. If the broken bow is the cause, then Laxman suggested that they should call an expert and get it repaired. If Parashuram wants something else, then Lord Ram here asks him to make a suggestion so that his wishes can be fulfilled. Either way, anger is no solution.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278 with respect to Laxman's plea, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279 with respect to Lord Ram's submission.]

कह मुनि राम जाइ रिस कैसें । अजहुँ अनुज तव चितव अनैसैं ॥ ७ ॥
एहि केँ कंठ कुठारु न दीन्हा । तौ मैं काह कोपु करि कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni rāma jā'i risa kaisēr̃. ajahum̃ anuja tava citava anaisēr̃. 7.
ēhi kēm̃ kaṇṭha kuṭhāru na dīnhā. tau maiṃ kāha kōpu kari kīnhā. 8.

The sage (Parashuram) said to Lord Ram—‘Ram, how can my anger go away (subside)? Even now, while you are trying to please me and ask for forgiveness and finding a solution for the vexed problem, your younger brother (Laxman) is looking at me with a sneer and mischief in his eyes. (7)

If I can't or do not put my battle-axe on his neck (i.e. if I can't or do not chop-off his neck), then all my anger goes in vain. What was the use for me to become angry if I can't punish him by chopping-off his head with my sharp axe? (8)

[Note—Parashuram had become obsessed with Laxman. He could not divert his attention away from this naughty prince whose every move, no matter how innocuous it may have been, was interpreted by the offended sage as being directed at him to taunt him. If Laxman looked even causally at his direction, the offended sage thought that he is sneering at him. Laxman was by nature of a cheerful disposition; smile was part of his normal facial expression. But the sage interpreted this harmless smile as a taunting smirk directed at him to tease him.

Even when Lord Ram was speaking to him, sage Parashuram's gaze was fixed on Laxman; so annoyed was the sage with him that Laxman's mere presence was intolerable for him! Since he hadn't been able to punish Laxman, his anger at the latter could not be requited, and so no matter what Lord Ram said, the sage's anger would not subside as long as Laxman was in sight. And to the chagrin of Parashuram, he could not force Laxman out of the venue as the latter was standing next to sage Vishwamitra. Had Laxman been standing next to Lord Ram, perhaps the angry sage would have done exactly that—demand that Laxman be thrown out of the venue.

In fact, he has demanded from Janak that “Laxman be removed from his sight” as we shall read shortly in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 280 below. But since Laxman was standing near sage Vishwamitra and not near Lord Ram, Parashuram couldn't force that his demands be met.

Now do we see how clever Laxman was when he decided to withdraw and go near his Guru, sage Vishwamitra when Lord Ram gestured him to stop his exchange of rancour with Parashuram as narrated in Doha no. 278 herein above.]

दो०. गर्भं स्रवहिं अवनिप रवनि सुनि कुठार गति घोर ।
परसु अछत देखउँ जिअत बैरी भूपकिसोर ॥ २७९ ॥

dōhā.

garbha sravahim avanipa ravani suni kuṭhāra gati ghōra.
parasu achata dēkha'um̐ ji'ata bairī bhūpakisōra. 279.

It is an irony that I am forced to see this 'young son of a king' ("bhūpakisōra"; meaning a prince), who is inimical towards me, alive, inspite of having my fierce battle-axe with me, the axe that is so formidable, relentless, powerful and merciless that when pregnant queens hear about it, they are so terrified that they abort automatically. (Doha no. 279)

[Note—Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 in this context.

The infuriated sage does not realize the gravity of what he is saying. Lord Ram has just addressed him as a "leader of sages" ("Muni-naayak" in verse no. 6 that precedes this Doha), implying that Parashuram should be careful with what he says and does because he is supposed to exemplify the virtues of great sages and hermits as he is a 'leader amongst them'. Who would expect that a great "Muni" goes on killing people and causing women to abort? It is a most shameful act. But Parashuram has lost his mental bearing because of his anger. This is exactly what Laxman had hinted to him in Doha no. 277 when he said that "anger is at the root of all sins". Say, will anyone kill embryos while he is sober? It is a wild act of an equally wild mind.

Parashuram does not realize that he is willy-nilly inviting scorn and infamy by boasting about his killing sprees.

Nevertheless, the angry sage feels frustrated that he has not been able to vent his anger at Laxman. The same frustration is expressed again in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 below when he is astonished why his hands do not move to strike at Laxman.]

चौ०. बहइ न हाथु दहइ रिस छाती । भा कुठारु कुंठित नृपघाती ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

baha'i na hāthu daha'i risa chātī. bhā kuṭhāru kuṇṭhita nṛpaghātī. 1.

I wonder why my hands are not moving forward (to strike at Laxman). This inability to take revenge is causing me heart-burn. It is equally ironic that my merciless axe, that is famed as the killer of kings ("Nrip-Ghaati", because it had always shown thirst for blood of kings, and was eager to take revenge from kings and princes), too has been paralysed now. (1)

[Note—Parashuram explains in this verse the statement that he made in Doha no. 279 above where he says that he regrets that he is unable to put the axe on Laxman's neck. It is because his hands and his axe have both become paralysed. He wonders why it is so.

Being unable to punish the offender for the first time in his life, Parashuram's inner being seems to get roasted in anger.

In the following verse no. 2 he blames the Creator, the "Vidhi", who has turned against him because the Creator is the one who determines each second of a person's life, and if the Creator does not want that Laxman be killed at the hands of Parashuram, then no matter what the latter does he won't be able to kill Laxman.

Therefore, in order to prevent Parashuram from killing Laxman, the Creator whom Parashuram considers as being unfavourable towards him has paralysed his hands and axe so that Laxman is not harmed.

This surprises Parashuram very much because it is at odds with his nature and temperament to let go of his enemy so easily.

As regards his hands it must be noted carefully here that he has been able hold his battle-axe in a menacing form in his hands, but this hand refuses to move forward and make a swiping movement so that the axe can strike at Laxman whom Parashuram has begun to wholesomely loathe as if the former was the latter's greatest and inveterate enemy.

We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 281 that when Parashuram challenges Lord Ram for a duel to prove that the Lord is worthy of being called "Ram", i.e. is worthy of being shown respect due to a warrior, his hand is raised and it holds the axe, but it isn't to strike at the Lord who stood with a bowed head.]

भयउ बाम बिधि फिरेउ सुभाऊ । मोरे हृदयँ कृपा कसि काऊ ॥ २ ॥

आजु दया दुखु दुसह सहावा । सुनि सौमित्रि बिहसि सिरु नावा ॥ ३ ॥

bhaya'u bāma bidhi phirē'u subhā'ū. mōrē hṛdayam' kṛpā kasi kā'ū. 2.
āju dayā dukhu dusaha sahāvā. suni saumitri bihasi siru nāvā. 3.

It appears that Vidhi (the Creator) has become hostile towards me (as he is not letting me fulfill my wishes). Otherwise, how can my nature and temperament suddenly take an about turn? How can there be mercy in my heart? (2)

Today, the Creator has forced me to suffer the great agony of having to show mercy¹!

[I have never learnt to refrain from hitting my opponent immediately. But it is such a big mystery for me that I am unable to avenge my insult and punish Laxman. This is obviously because the Creator has become hostile towards me; he wishes to humiliate me and force me to go against my wishes and nature.]

When Saumitri (i.e. Laxman; literally, 'the son of queen Sumitra') heard this (funny) regret of Parashuram, he smiled once again and bowed his head.

[Laxman laughed subtly at this queer regret of Parashuram, because a sage should regret when he becomes angry but here we have a person who claims himself to be a sage and a Brahmin and regretting for showing mercy! He 'bowed his head' so as to prevent Parashuram from looking at him and observing the smile on his face as it would make the sage jump out of his skin with a fresh dose of anger.]² (3)

[Note—¹What a pity! A sage should wonder why he has lost his cool and become angry at any given time, but here we have a 'sage' who wonders "why he has not become sufficiently cruel and kill his opponent instantaneously"!]

²How ironical it is that Parashuram feels ashamed to show mercy and compassion! He should, on the other hand, have been ashamed at showing anger as well as his boastings about his merciless killings. This is the reason why Laxman smirked and sneered once again at the ridiculous way Parashuram is behaving under the influence of anger. Parashuram has indeed made a clown of himself in the full assembly.]

बाउ कृपा मूरति अनुकूला । बोलत बचन झरत जनु फूला ॥ ४ ॥

जौं पै कृपाँ जरिहिं मुनि गाता । क्रोध भएँ तनु राख बिधाता ॥ ५ ॥

bā'u kṛpā mūrati anukūlā. bōlata bacana jharata janu phūlā. 4.
jaur̥m pai kṛpām̐ jarihiṁ muni gātā. krōdha bha'ēm̐ tanu rākha bidhātā. 5.

Amused and unable to restrain himself, Laxman scoffed at Parashuram in a derisive manner, saying with open sarcasm in his words—‘Oh sage! Your kind words that are spoken with a lot of wind (i.e. spoken aloud; spoken with a lot of boasting and haughtiness) are in accordance with your gracious image (form; countenance; appearance). [A lot of pun and mockery is involved here.]

When you speak it appears that flowers (that symbolize acidic words, rancour, vengeance, wrathfulness, bad temper etc.) are showering down from a tree symbolized by your image (that is like a ugly tree with a hard bark, with thorns sticking out everywhere from its trunk and branches, with red hot carnivorous flowers which trap insects and kill them, and that is so short of green leaves that it gives no shade to anyone who comes near it).¹ (4)

Oh sage, if your being benevolent and merciful has made your body burn as if it on fire, well then what would have happened if you would be angry; surely your body would burn to ashes!² (5)

[Note—¹Laxman is at his sarcastic best once again. He uses harmless words, but their hidden meaning and implication are very caustic. The reference to the “wind” has two meanings here—one, it means a boastful talk, and two, it means that when Parashuram says anything it appears that the wind or a strong breeze is causing bitter flowers to fall down from the tree that is symbolized by his body.

The wind will make the flowers fall down only when it is strong enough to shake the branches of a tree. So Laxman means that Parashuram is so angry that when he speaks his whole body shakes with anger; he gesticulates wildly and throws up his arms in the air as if punching someone there!

Laxman scoffs at Parashuram and says in effect that—“When Parashuram lets out his steam and begins to blow hot and cold, his words seem to be in consonance with his menacing appearance and fearful countenance. Is he not holding an axe, a bow and arrows? Why, say, has anyone ever seen a hermit, a sage and a Brahmin with these weapons?”

In this verse, Parashuram is compared to a tree that is hard and wild. This tree has dry and rough bark that would cut the skin of anyone trying to touch it. It does not provide any relief by way of shade to others, and instead it has sharp pointed thorns sticking out of its sides which will hurt anyone who wants to take a little rest by leaning his back against it. Its flowers are killers of insects, and foul smelling. Even the wind that grazes this tree becomes foul and hot.

²Parashuram has spared Laxman because the latter is a boy. This is tantamount to his showing mercy which is against his nature and reputation. Laxman taunts the sage by

recalling his own admission that “his heart is burning with anger because he could not punish Laxman for whatever reason” as conceded by him in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 herein above by saying that if having mercy causes his body to get so heated that his inner being is roasted, then if he did get actually angry in the way he is accustomed to be, then obviously he would be reduced to ash!

If the virtue of having mercy which always has soothing effect on the nerves and the mind causes the body to be hot as if being roasted in fire, then actual anger and being merciless would surely reduce Parashuram to ash because its heat is many times more intense.]

देखु जनक हठि बालकु एहू । कीन्ह चहत जड़ जमपुर गेहू ॥ ६ ॥
बेगि करहु किन आँखिन्ह ओटा । देखत छोट खोट नृप ढोटा ॥ ७ ॥

dēkhu janaka haṭhi bālaku ēhū. kīnha cahata jara jamapura gēhū. 6.
bēgi karahu kina ām̐khinha ōṭā. dēkhata chōṭa khōṭa nr̥pa ḍhōṭā. 7.

(Hearing the mocking words of Laxman, sage Parashuram turned to king Janak and said—) ‘Look Janak! This stubborn boy (“Hati-Baalak”) wants to go to the abode of Jampur, the god of death*. [In other words, Laxman is constantly irritating me; and if I lose my cool I will kill him and send him to the abode of the god of death known as Jampur.]

*[This verse can be read in another way also: “Look Janak at this stubborn boy. It appears that he wishes to make the abode of the god of death, known as Jampur, as his home. In other words, don’t blame me if I kill him and send him to hell.] (6)

So, remove this son of a king (i.e. a prince; “Nrip Dhota”) out of my sight. He appears diminutive in size and very humble in his appearance, but actually he is highly pervert and wicked.’ (7)

[Note—Parashuram turned to Janak in order to ensure that Laxman keeps quiet, and not aggravate the already bitter feeling between them any further, because he thought that the king, being the host of the ceremony, would be able to restrain Laxman more effectively than either his elder brother Ram or his Guru sage Vishwamitra.

Lord Ram had attempted to quieten Laxman (refer: Baal Kand, Doha nos. 276 and 278), but it had little impact on the latter. Perhaps this is because Laxman and Lord Ram shared a very congenial brotherly relationship that kept them very close to each other and made them love each other so dearly that neither of them was afraid that he would physically harmed by the other. After all, Laxman had become angry because sage Parashuram was unnecessarily throwing a spanner in the wheel by trying to obstruct Lord Ram’s marriage ceremony and insulting him by threatening to kill him for breaking the bow. It was a duty of Laxman to give moral and physical support to his brother when he is alone to face an adversary. Laxman just could not tolerate someone saying unpleasant words to Lord Ram or acting in a hostile manner with the Lord.

Instead of strongly admonishing Laxman for his insolent behaviour in public, Lord Ram had sought his pardoning from Parashuram. The same thing was done by sage Vishwamitra when he too asked Parashuram to excuse Laxman instead of scolding the latter to behave with respect with the renowned sage—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 275.

Neither Lord Ram nor sage Vishwamitra had condemned Laxman for his misbehaviour. On the contrary, king Janak had declared that “Laxman must stop; his

behaviour and words are very inappropriate”—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 278. Therefore, Parashuram had some hopes from Janak that he may sternly pull up Laxman for his persistent impertinent and insolent behaviour because, being the host of the ceremony, it was the duty of Janak to maintain order and decency in the assembly.

So, what should Janak do to avoid the situation from slipping out of hand? He must remove Laxman from the site. Or, at least, tell Laxman to sit somewhere out of sight and earshot of Parashuram.]

बिहसे लखनु कहा मन माहीं । मूढ़ें आँखि कतहुँ कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bihasē lakhanu kahā mana māhīm. mūdēm āṁkhi katahumṁ kō'u nāhīm. 8.

[Laxman was so mischievous that he still did not relent, but had a ready-made retort for Parashuram's asking Janak to remove him from sight and earshot. So—]

Laxman muttered to himself and said, 'Well, if one closes one's eyes, no one would be seen by him, and for all practical purposes he is left alone. [In other words, why is Parashuram not closing his eyes instead of asking him to leave the venue? If he does so, he will have an additional benefit—he won't be able to see the broken bow, the mere sight of which is keeping his anger alive.]' (8)

[Note—Earlier we have read that sage Vishwamitra had also muttered under his breath to say in essence that Parashuram seems to be hallucinating—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 275.

Laxman smiled at Parashuram's loss of sense and mental bearing because he is babbling incoherently, saying inconsistent things. First he had said that he would kill Laxman with his battle-axe (refer: Baal Kand—Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; again Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275). Then he said that he is unable to lift his hands to kill Laxman and his axe has become stupefied (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280). And now he says that he will send Laxman to hell, i.e. to 'Jampur' which is the abode of the god of death (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 280).

In other words it is clear that Parashuram won't be able to do anything that he threatens to do. He is making a clown of himself by such nonsensical statements. Unable to carry out his threats, he now wants Laxman out of the venue.

Not only this; he lost hopes from Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra. So he has now turned for help to king Janak. He is behaving in a ridiculous manner like a man not certain of himself.

So, Laxman made the comments as narrated in the present verse no. 8 in a low voice ostensibly to himself, but with a sharp smirk and a sneer on his face, and loud enough so that Parashuram could hear it!]

दो०. परसुरामु तब राम प्रति बोले उर अति क्रोधु ।
संभु सरासनु तोरि सठ करसि हमार प्रबोधु ॥ २८० ॥

dōhā.

parasurāmu taba rāma prati bōlē ura ati krōdhu.
sambhu sarāsanu tōri saṭha karasi hamāra prabōdhu. 280.

Then, Parashuram turned to Lord Ram in a very angry mood and said—‘Oh you wicked fellow! You have first broken the (revered) bow of Lord Shiva, and now you give me a lecture, you teach me wise lessons! (Doha no. 280)

[Note—It is obvious that Parashuram’s anger is directed more at Laxman than at Lord Ram because he had just overheard the former saying that “if one closes his eyes, no one would matter to him” when the angry sage wanted Laxman out of sight and earshot—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 280. Parashuram took this statement of Laxman as a preaching, as if Laxman was teaching him a lesson as to how one can avoid someone who irritates him. Unable to face the irritating younger brother for fear of further insult, Parashuram preferred to deal with the elder brother who appeared to be docile, polite and more decent as compared to his younger sibling.

Besides this above conclusion we may also say that Parashuram was directly referring to Lord Ram’s advice that the Lord had given him earlier; for instance, in which Lord Ram had essentially advised the sage that “he should forgive Laxman as the latter is merely a child, and children do not have the proper sense to decide how to behave with whom, and that elders should overlook mischief of innocent children”. Refer: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 279.

This Doha also shows that by this time Parashuram had become fully aware that the bow had been broken by Lord Ram.]

चौ०. बंधु कहइ कटु संमत तोरें । तू छल बिनय करसि कर जोरें ॥ १ ॥
करु परितोषु मोर संग्रामा । नाहिं त छाड़ कहाउब रामा ॥ २ ॥
छलु तजि करहि समरु सिवद्रोही । बंधु सहित न त मारउँ तोही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bandhu kaha'i kaṭu sammata tōrēm. tū chala binaya karasi kara jōrēm. 1.
karu paritōṣu mōra saṅgrāmā. nāhiṁ ta chāra kahā'uba rāmā. 2.
chalu taji karahi samaru sivadrōhī. bandhu sahita na ta māra'um' tōhī. 3.

Your brother has your hidden (subtle) consent when he says such irritating and scorching words, and makes such scathing remarks at me. [For, otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to say things that he has said, and you wouldn't have taken his side by asking me to forgive him.]

And you are so cunning that you pray to me by holding your hands together as if to show how nice and submissive you are.¹ (1)

Satisfy me in a battle, or stop calling yourself a ‘Ram’.² (2)

You, the enemy of Lord Shiva, must fight with me without employing any cunning tricks; otherwise I would kill you along with your brother.³ (3)

[Note—¹Sage Parashuram assumed that Laxman had his elder brother’s tacit support in confronting him and using scathing remarks for him. In Parashuram’s views, Lord Ram

has used Laxman as a front-man to rebuke the sage, and still pretend to be innocent and very polite. Otherwise, it is just not possible that Laxman would go on and on with his obtrusive and insolent behaviour without his elder brother telling him to shut up.

Parashuram in effect tells the Lord that he is very cunning and mischievous like his younger sibling. While he has given his subtle nod to Laxman to confront the sage, he himself pretends to be the holy-cow, docile and submissive, asking for mercy and forgiveness.

²By saying “stop calling yourself ‘Ram’ if you can’t defeat me in an honest battle”, Parashuram means that if Lord Ram can’t defeat him in an even fight where no dirty tricks are played and only valour and skill are employed, then he will lose the right to call himself a warrior of this name, i.e. a warrior whose name incorporates the word “Ram”, and thereby demean the greatness that is inherently attached with the word “Ram”.

In other words, Parashuram says that the word “Ram” has great importance and it cannot be taken lightly; it is associated with someone who is the invincible conqueror of the world, the Supreme Lord of the world. A weak, wicked, pretentious and imbecile person has no right to use this great word as his name. In fact, the word “Ram” is called the ‘Tarak Mantra’, the spiritual formula which gives liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature. This is a universal doctrine accepted in the Upanishads, and an entire Upanishad known as the Ram Tapini Upanishad, having two elaborate divisions, is dedicated to it.

Lord Ram is the personified form of the Supreme Being, known in the Upanishads as “Brahm”, and in the Purans as the “Viraat Purush” or Lord Vishnu. It is only the Lord who has the right to call himself with this great name that has divinity and supremacy in this creation attached to it in a natural way.

So, Parashuram tells Lord Ram that it would be a matter of great shame and an issue that would need an immediate remedial action in the form of severe punishment if the latter can’t prove himself to be the original “Ram” as implied by the name. If that happens then clearly he is an imposter who is deceiving the world by using such a holy name, and therefore he (Parashuram) would punish him with death.

An interesting deduction can be made here. Sage Parashuram was not an ordinary Brahmin sage; he was very learned and well-versed in the scriptures. He must have known what the word “Ram” refers to in the scriptures. He must have also read in the Purans that time and again Lord Vishnu had taken the form of a human to overcome evil forces represented by the demons, and one such incarnation of Lord Vishnu was named “Ram”.

So he had become suspicious about who this particular prince calling himself ‘Ram’ was—because, by his own admission, he was surprised that his axe and his hand have refused to obey him when he tried to lift them to punish Laxman, and so he was forced to let-off the offender though it was completely against his nature. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 280.

Besides this, he was fully aware that to break the mighty bow of Lord Shiva was not a joke; only the Supreme Being himself could do it because no living being, either of the mortal world where humans live, or of the world where Spirits such as the various categories of gods and demi-gods live, can ever dare to destroy anything belonging to Shiva who himself is the “Maha Deva”, the Great God who is superior to all the gods in creation.

Therefore there must be surely some mystery in the whole episode of the breaking of the bow by this young prince. Parashuram was curious to find out what it was. Hence, he used this ploy of a battle to find out the truth, because if this prince was the real “Ram”, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it was sure that his identity would be revealed. Perhaps even Lord Shiva, Parashuram’s Guru, would intervene to restrain the sage from raising

his weapons against the Supreme Lord of creation as it would be a horrendous sin that would be unpardonable. On the other hand, if this prince was an imposter, then Parashuram was determined to avenge his insult as well as the implied insult of Lord Shiva when the Lord's bow was broken.

³This is what sage Parashuram meant when he said he would kill the two brothers if Lord Ram can't 'satisfy' him in battle—i.e. if Lord Ram can't convince him that he is indeed Lord Vishnu.]

भृगुपति बकहिं कुठार उठाएँ । मन मुसुकाहिं रामु सिर नाएँ ॥ ४ ॥

bhṛgupati bakahim kuṭhāra uṭhā'ēm̐. mana musukāhim rāmu sira nā'ēm̐. 4.

Bhṛigupati (sage Parashuram) was ranting and raving angrily with his raised hands that held the axe. [Parashuram continued to adopt a hostile posture, threatening to hit Lord Ram with his battle-axe.]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram smiled and lowered his head.¹ (4)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram 'smile'? It was a sarcastic smile because by now Parashuram's boast had been exposed. The sage had himself conceded a moment ago that he is astonished why his hands are not moving ahead to strike his opponent with the axe (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 above), and he has till now threatened in vain to kill the two brothers umpteen numbers of time. He has lost all sense of self-respect and propriety because in spite of proving himself in vain and incompetent to harm the two brothers he continues to make a mockery of himself by once again raising his axe as if to strike Lord Ram with it.

Why did Lord Ram lower his head? Well, the Lord lowered his head for two reasons. One was to tell the sage that instead of threats he should go ahead and use his axe on him by bringing it down on the Lord's neck, if he can do it that is. This will be clear from Chaupai line no. 7 herein below. And if he can't do it, then it is high time that he stops this rubbish and boastful talk, and behave in a responsible manner like a sage of his stature should.

The second reason was to show that the Lord does not want to confront and insult Parashuram in any way because he was a respectable sage as well as a Brahmin who was born in the race of an ancient and respected sage by the name of Bhṛigu. Lowering the head or bowing it before someone is a sign of respect and submission.

Lord Ram wished to reply to Parashuram's accusation that he was pretending to be humble and submissive while not only condoning his younger brother's misbehaviour but also giving a tacit support to the latter and signalling him secretly to go ahead and teach Parashuram a lesson. We have read that the angry sage has called Lord Ram 'cunning and pretentious' because on the one hand the Lord pretends to ask for forgiveness and on the other hand he signals Laxman to tease and insult the sage. Refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281 herein above.

Now, even Lord Ram would adopt a stern posture as we shall find out in the following verses because he feels that Parashuram understands only one language—and it is the language of toughness, rebuke, tit-for-tat, and hard talk. The sage won't yield to politeness; he thinks that a polite man is a coward. Being polite and civil with Parashuram would not stop him from continuing with his rantings and ravings.]

गुनह लखन कर हम पर रोषू । कतहुँ सुधाइहु ते बड़ दोषू ॥ ५ ॥

gunaha lakhana kara hama para rōṣū. katahum^ṣ sudhā'ihu tē baṛa dōṣū. 5.

[Lord Ram said to Parashuram—] ‘The fault is of Laxman’s (that he has spoken out boldly at you, whose words and behaviour has provoked you so much, but upon whom you could not carry out your threats of severe punishment of killing him with your axe), and ironically now you are venting your anger upon me.

Indeed, sometimes it is true that politeness, humbleness and civility is a bane instead of being a virtue for the person who practices it. (5)

[Note—That is, it is Laxman who has offended you, but unable to get square with him, you seem to avenge your hurt ego by directing your wrath at me because I am submitting myself before you and show politeness before you in deference to your exalted stature of being a Brahmin sage. My gesture of politeness and respect towards you is being misinterpreted by you as my weakness. So you have decided to seek revenge with me after you have failed miserably to settle your accounts with Laxman who was a proper match for you and a perfect antidote for your inflated ego.

I am polite with you unlike Laxman, so you have decided to be harsh with me. I have discovered to my dismay the truth of the adage that more often than not, good manners lead a man to more discomfiture than his being rude and ill-humoured in certain situations.]

टेढ़ जानि सब बंदइ काहू । बक्र चंद्रमहि ग्रसइ न राहू ॥ ६ ॥

tēṛha jāni saba banda'i kāhū. bakra candramahi grasa'i na rāhū. 6.

Verily, if a person is wicked and crooked, (if people know that annoying or irritating him even slightly would invariably invite bitter scorn and a ‘bite like that of a wasp’—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 279), everyone would show him respect, everyone would be courteous towards him (though this show of respect and courteousness is superficial and done just to avoid any direct confrontation with him.

Indeed it is true as reflected in the case of the moon. Rahu (the mythological demon) does not devour a crooked moon. (6)

[Note—Rahu is a demon who has a boon that he can eat the moon to squeeze out its nectar in order to derive his nourishment because his trunk had been severed by Lord Vishnu’s discus during an event dating back to the churning of the celestial ocean by the gods and the demons. This story is narrated earlier as note no. 3 that accompanies Chaupai line no. 2 which precedes Doha no. 238 of this chapter known as Baal Kand of this book Ram Charit Manas.

Though Rahu devours a full moon, which according to mythology is the cause of the lunar eclipse, he is scared of eating the moon that has a carved-out edge, the edge which is curved like a sickle, or in other words ‘an edge that is not perfectly rounded as during the night of the full moon’, because Rahu is afraid that this shape of the moon will cut his mouth and cause injury to him.

This metaphor is employed by Lord Ram to mean that the angry sage Parashuram has started avoiding Laxman now because he has discovered to his dismay and chagrin that Laxman would retort viciously and sting him like a wasp. But finding Lord Ram polite and submissive, Parashuram has decided to vent his anger at him.]

राम कहेउ रिस तजिअ मुनीसा । कर कुठारु आगेँ यह सीसा ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं रिस जाइ करिअ सोइ स्वामी । मोहि जानिअ आपन अनुगामी ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kahē'u risa taji'a munīsā. kara kuṭhāru āgēr̥m yaha sīsā. 7.
jēhim̐ risa jā'i kari'a sō'i svāmī. mōhi jāni'a āpana anugāmī. 8.

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Oh sage, get rid of your anger and calm down. You have your axe in your hand, and my lowered head is in front of you. (7)

Oh Lord, do anything you wish by which your anger may subside. [That is, if you want to use your axe upon me, go ahead and do so.] But remember that I am your humble follower, and have submitted myself before you, before you take any impulsive action.

[In other words, be careful that the world is watching you and it knows that I have surrendered before you. Remember: If you harm me in any way by taking any reckless action in the context of your inability of harming my younger brother Laxman who had stood up against your threats and rantings, the world would not forgive you; you will invite the harshest of scorn and the greatest of ignominy by harming me. It would clearly mean that Laxman was right in beating you in your own game; he was right in giving you the bitter dose of medicine that you deserve.

And be warned also that Laxman is watching you. Be careful with your actions and hands. Remember: If you do decide to hurt me with your axe, Laxman would pounce upon you and cut-off your hands even before they reach my neck. Don't blame me later on for being instrumental in dismembering your body!] (8)

[Note—Parashuram was itching to strike with the axe though he has himself admitted that he won't be able to do so. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 280.

So Lord Ram knew that Parashuram won't be able to harm him. But the Lord did not wish to give Parashuram a chance to say that he had not used his axe at him because he the Lord had begged for mercy and requested to spare his life. Instead, Lord Ram has invited Parashuram to use his axe on his neck as the Lord has lowered his head before Parashuram and told him to do anything he likes.

Hence, Parashuram could no longer boast of showing mercy or pity. He will have to admit in open court that he could not hurt either Laxman or Lord Ram as he was indeed 'full of wind' (i.e. boastful and pretentious) as Laxman has said earlier in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.

So we see that Parashuram's anger has made him red-faced and an object of pity himself. Whatever dignity and respect he had for himself in the eyes of the people were crushed to pieces by his own anger and haughty nature. Indeed what Laxman had said in Doha no. 277 earlier has proved itself to be true in case of Parashuram—“that anger is at the root of all evil, that one loses his senses and wisdom under its evil influences, thereby inviting ill name for himself by behaving in an evil manner”.]

दो०. प्रभुहि सेवकहि समरु कस तजहु बिप्रबर रोसु ।
बेषु बिलोकें कहेसि कछु बालकहू नहिं दोसु ॥ २८१ ॥

dōhā.

prabhuhi sēvakahi samaru kasa tajahu biprabara rōsu.
bēṣu bilōkēm kahēsi kachu bālakahū nahim dōsu. 281.

Why, there is no question of a battle between a humble servant and his lord. So, oh exalted sage, discard your anger and be calmed down.

[Here, Lord Ram has compared sage Parashuram with the ‘lord’, and himself with a ‘servant’. A servant always obeys his master; he cannot imagine of fighting with his lord.]

This boy (i.e. Laxman) has said something that has irritated you, but even then it is not entirely his fault. He has said whatever he said when he saw your appearances and your demeanours.

[Laxman in effect said, “Oh sage! Your appearance is more like a warrior than like a sage or hermit. Had your demeanours been like a sage and hermit who is expected to be calm, serene, munificent, smiling, friendly, contented and welcoming, one who inspires confidence and warmth and invites automatic respect and reverence from the person in front, instead of spreading terror and affright among the masses like you have done, I would naturally have treated you with the greatest of respect that would have surpassed what others may have shown to you.

But the problem is that your behaviour, visage and form give a signal that is quite the contrary. You had started shouting and threatening as soon as you stepped here. Tell me honestly then, is this becoming of a person who claims himself to be a respectful sage and a hermit and a Brahmin? Say then, how can you expect an inexperienced boy like me, who does not even recognise you, or knows who you actually are and about your exalted pedigree, to show respect to you in the light of your wielding the battle-axe threateningly at me and the rash way you are behaving, hopping and jumping madly here and there?

Therefore, the fault of this meeting turning so sour and dour, getting more hostile and bitter by the passage of each moment, with the accompanying verbal spat between you and me, actually lies with you and not with me!’] (Doha no. 281)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 268 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (ii) Doha no. 273 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 282 that follows herein below.]

चौ०. देखि कुठार बान धनु धारी । भै लरिकहि रिस बीरु बिचारी ॥ १ ॥
नामु जान पै तुझहि न चीन्हा । बंस सुभायँ उतरु तेहिं दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi kuṭhāra bāna dhanu dhārī. bhai larikahi risa bīru bicārī. 1.
nāmu jāna pai tumhahi na cīnhā. bansa subhāyam’ utaru tēhim dīnhā. 2.

When he (Laxman) saw your battle-axe, the arrow and the bow, he thought that you were some warrior, and in his childishness¹ he became annoyed and angry. (1)

In spite of coming to know your name², he could not recognise you and your potentially fully, and therefore he replied to you in a way to which he is accustomed to in accordance with the race to which he belongs³.

[In other words, Laxman replied to you in a way that all princes belonging to the Kshatriya race are accustomed to. They cannot tolerate anyone threatening them and trying to brow-beat them into submission with boastful talk and pretensions, wielding weapons at them and raving boastfully about their killing sprees. When you claimed that you had killed Sahastrabaahu and the Kshatriya kings at random, it simply meant that you were threatening Laxman with the same fate. Why, couldn't you have said calmly at the outset that you had immense mystical powers by doing severe Tapa, that you had pleased Lord Shiva, that since you regard Lord Shiva as your patron deity it is annoying to you that the Lord's bow should be broken by someone, and that it is the prime reason of your getting hurt and angry and you wish to know why this Shiva's bow was broken, before you started yelling and threatening us with death.

Why, even without acquainting yourself with the facts and the ground realities in a calm manner, even without determining whether the bow was broken to willfully insult Shiva or because Shiva himself had disliked it so much that he did not want to keep it with him and had intended it to get rusted and perish in due course of time so as to get rid of its memory, and therefore it was just incidental that it got broken as soon as I (Ram) touched it, you have behaved in an irrational manner that is hostile, belligerent and aggressive, ranting and raving from the instant you had put your feet in the arena? You ought to have clarified matters first and then taken appropriate action, oughtn't you?

Say oh sage, what do you expect from others if you don't behave in a dignified manner befitting your own stature as a great sage, a revered hermit and an honourable Brahmin. In that case, I say in all sooth, Laxman would have paid his obeisance to you for we are taught to show the greatest of respects to elders, especially Brahmins, sages, seers and hermits. If you have any doubts, please ask sage Vishwamitra; he will vouch for every word I am uttering.

But instead of it if you act like a boastful warrior, menacingly threatening vengeance at others for no fault of theirs, then obviously you must be prepared to get a corresponding response from them like the one that Laxman gave you.] (2)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 273, Laxman has himself said that he has spoken rudely with Parashuram because he saw the axe, the bow and the arrow, ensembles of a warrior and not of a sage or a hermit. Therefore, being a warrior prince, Laxman says he replied to Parashuram in a manner befitting a warrior. In this present verse, Lord Ram reiterates the same thing.

Earlier also, Lord Ram had requested the angry sage to pardon Laxman because he was a 'child' ("Sisu") and a 'servant' ("Sevak") of the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 277.

Sage Parashuram has himself accepted that Laxman is a mere child, or an immature boy, and it is because of this that he does not hit him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

²Laxman had said himself that he knew that Parashuram was a son in the family of sage Bhrigu, and therefore a Brahmin—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 273.

So, what Lord Ram meant was that though Laxman knew about Parashuram being a son of the family of Bhrigu, he wasn't aware of the sage's rare personal spiritual achievements and mystical powers that he had acquired by doing severe Tapa and Yoga (penances and meditation). Laxman treated Parashuram as an ordinary son of some sage, because in ancient times many sages used to marry and have families. One good instance is that of sage Vasistha, the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya to which the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, belonged.

So Laxman thought that Parashuram was some spoilt son of Bhrigu's family who is accustomed to boast and go around throwing his weight on others, threatening them of punishment by invoking his Brahmin race.

Laxman might have also deduced that since Parashuram was a mass murderer of kings and possessed many negative traits such as a short temper, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, recklessness etc., perhaps his father (Jamdagni) was so disgusted by his behaviour that he had thrown him out of his hermitage, disowning him and disinheriting him from the legacy of sage Bhrigu.

³Parashuram had loudly boasted about his many rarities. But these achievements were all of a negative nature, such as for instance his slaying of Sahastrabaahu (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 271), his famed anger as well as his renown as a perpetual enemy of the Kshatriya race so much so that he had mercilessly killed countless numbers of kings over time and again (Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 272).

This claim of Parashuram—that he had killed Kshatriya kings many times over—had only led to Laxman being enraged as the latter thought that Parashuram was citing these killings to threaten him. And any brave prince worth his name won't tolerate this behaviour; he won't be cowed down by a person who thinks random bloodshed is something of credit and worthy of boasting about.

So, therefore, Laxman replied to Parashuram in a way that is appropriate for a brave and fearless prince.]

जौं तुह्र औतेहु मुनि की नाई । पद रज सिर सिसु धरत गोसाईं ॥ ३ ॥

छमहु चूक अनजानत केरी । चहिअ बिप्र उर कृपा घनेरी ॥ ४ ॥

jaur̥m tumha autēhu muni kī nā'īr̥m. pada raja sira sisu dharata gōsā'īr̥m. 3.
chamahu cūka anajānata kērī. cahi'a bipra ura kṛpā ghanērī. 4.

Oh sage! Had you appeared to be like a sage and a hermit ("Muni"), this child ("Sisu") would have put his head on the dust of your feet (or, he would have put the dust of your feet to his head) as a mark of showing great respect to you.¹ (3)

So, whatever he has done was done inadvertently and out of ignorance. You should therefore forgive him. Oh sage, a Brahmin ought to have a lot of mercy and kindness in his heart (as this is their special quality).² (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram means to tell Parashuram that if the latter had been polite and affable like one expects a learned Brahmin and a renowned sage and hermit to be, Laxman would have shown the greatest respect by putting his head to Parashuram's feet.

This is what they have been taught—to show great respect to elders, to sages and Brahmins. There are ample proofs of it—for instance, when sage Vishwamitra came to Ayodhya to request king Dasrath to send the two brothers with him to his hermitage so that the demons who had been defiling his fire sacrifice could be eliminated, the king had summoned his four sons, i.e. Lord Ram and his other three brothers, and made them bow

at the feet of the sage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 207.

²Lord Ram has subtly and politely chided Parashuram with this observation. Parashuram has become so angry at Laxman because he feels insulted by the latter's behaviour. But for this behaviour of Laxman, it is Parashuram who himself is responsible as has been clearly said in Chaupai line nos. 1-3 herein above. Laxman was a Kshatriya prince, so his behaviour is understandable.

But what defense has Parashuram for his own rowdy behaviour? He has not at all acted in a decent and polite manner like a learned Brahmin or a wise sage, or even a responsible adult should have. Instead, his behaviour reminds one of street urchins, hooligans and pervert ruffians itching for creating nuisance and raucous.

Hence, Lord Ram urges Parashuram to exhibit noble virtues of a Brahmin by showing grace and compassion.]

हमहि तुझहि सरिबरि कसि नाथा । कहहु न कहाँ चरन कहँ माथा ॥ ५ ॥

hamahi tumhahi saribari kasi nāthā. kahahu na kahām̃ carana kahām̃ māthā. 5.

Say, how can there be any comparison between me* and you¹?

[*The first word used in this verse is “Hamahi” which has a singular as well as a plural connotation. If the singular meaning is taken, then it would mean ‘me’, a reference to the speaker, which in this case is Lord Ram. However, the plural would be ‘we’, and in this case the verse would mean that Lord Ram includes Laxman when he says that the sage is so exalted and great that there can be no comparison between the two brothers and him. All the anger and fire have no ground, and are raging without any cause.]

Say, how can one compare the feet with the head²?

[This part of the verse may also be read as—“Wherever your holy feet are, I am (or ‘we’ are) ready to put my (or ‘our’) head (s) there to show you respect”.] (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has indirectly hinted to sage Parashuram that there is no comparison between them because the Lord is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and Parashuram symbolizes an ordinary creature engulfed in worldly delusions and attachments. Otherwise, if Parashuram is a true hermit and renunciate, why is he so bothered about a gross thing such a bow? Does he not know that Lord Shiva had himself felt disgusted with this bow, and hating to keep it with him he had kept it with the ancestors of king Janak? Notwithstanding the history of this bow, a hermit and a renunciate sage should be detached and dispassionate towards everything related to this mundane gross world; he should be of a loving and compassionate temperament, and not vengeful and acerbic like Parashuram.

Even if Lord Ram's sublime form as the Supreme Being is overlooked, the Lord has exhibited all the noble virtues and exemplary characters that a good human being should possess. On the other hand, Parashuram has all the negative characters one ought to avoid. So, naturally and obviously there is no comparison. But Parashuram's anger had so much the better of him that he still could not understand the hidden suggestions in Lord Ram's statements, and continued with his earlier acrimonious posture.

²The ‘feet’ is the lowest part of the body and is a metaphor for someone who is humble and lowly. On the other hand, the ‘head’ stands for an exalted stature, a high position and of learning. After all, Ram was a Kshatriya prince, and Parashuram was a Brahmin. A Brahmin is always more respectable as compared to any other class in the

society. How can a very junior man compare himself to one who is very senior to him in the social hierarchy and pedigree as the feet is to the head?

Lord Ram makes these observations to somehow assuage the sage's ruffled ego and and calm him down. Parashuram was accustomed to outright submission from his opponents, expecting people to fall down at his feet wherever he went, and it was the first time in his life he faced the treatment that Laxman had meted out to him. So, by these polite and prayerful words of humility and humbleness, Lord Ram tries to sooth the sage's anger and sort of apply an ointment on his wounded ego.

He essentially tells Parashuram that he as well as his brother Laxman fall down at his feet because he is a Brahmin, and so Parashuram should also behave like a true Brahmin by forgiving them and discarding his anger and smitefulness.]

राम मात्र लघु नाम हमारा । परसु सहित बड़ नाम तोहारा ॥ ६ ॥

rāma mātra laghu nāma hamārā. parasu sahita baṛa nāma tōhārā. 6.

My name is a small one, consisting of only one word 'Ram', but yours is a big one because it has the prefix 'Parashu' attached to it¹.

[Parashu + Ram = Parashuram, the name of the sage. Lord Ram means that even in their names, the sage's name is 'bigger' as compared to the Lord's name. So, as the Lord has said above, 'There is no comparison between you and me. Your name has a prefix attached to it, and this prefix, the word 'Parashu' meaning an axe, instantly makes you so distinguished amongst all the warriors on this earth. I am merely a humble person with no distinguishing title attached to my name. So oh sage, how can I ever deem myself to be equal to you. Perish the thought and calm down.'](6)

[Note—¹There is a profound spiritual message here. Lord Ram's name "RAM" is a great Mantra, a spiritual formula that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to a creature's soul. It is therefore known as a 'Tarak Mantra', one that takes the living being across the 'Bhava-Sagar', the ocean represented by this world of delusions, miseries, birth and death.

Here, the Lord has advised his devotees not to dilute the holiness and divinity of his Tarak Mantra by adding unnecessary letters or words or phrases to it. Let the Holy Name retain its pristine glory by being plain and simple "RAM".

Another interpretation of this verse is that if someone acts smart by tampering with this holy name by adding letters to it in his enthusiasm to make it look more attractive and effective, he is not only making a fool out of himself but also poisoning the name "RAM" because any addition to it would make it have the same effect as the word "Parashuram" has. That is, just like sage Parashuram possessing all the characters that are opposite of Lord Ram inspite of having the word "Ram" as part of his name, any tweaking of the Holy Name "RAM" by additions of any kind would make it spiritually ineffective and dangerous for the person who uses it for his spiritual practices. This is because instead of being of any help, it would only create problems for the practitioner just like the prefix 'Parashu', which means an 'axe', had changed the entire nature and character of a sage from being someone worthy of respect and showing exemplary virtues, to someone who is foul mouthed, someone who is full of rancour, spite and haughtiness, someone who is despised by the world at large.]

देव एकु गुनु धनुष हमारें । नव गुन परम पुनीत तुम्हारें ॥ ७ ॥

dēva ēku gunu dhanuṣa hamārēm. nava guna parama punīta tumhārēm. 7.

*Oh Lord! (Another reason why no comparison can be made between your exalted stature and me is as follows—) While I have only one quality, and it is that I have a bow which makes me a warrior, you have nine divine qualities¹. [So, obviously you are much senior to me in every respect.]

[*This verse can be read as follows also—“Oh Lord! While my bow has only one quality, and it is to win wars, your bow has nine divine qualities.”² (7)]

[Note—¹The ‘nine divine qualities’ mentioned by Lord Ram are the nine auspicious and noble virtues that are inherently present in a Brahmin as well as in a sage. They are the following—Sham (equanimity; evenness of mind; tranquility), Dam (self-restraint), Tapa (penance and austerity), Shauch (cleanliness and purity, external and internal), Kshama (forgiveness, forbearance), Aarjav (straightforwardness; honesty in behaviour and talk), Gyan and Vigyan (knowledge and self-realisation), and Vishwas (belief in God; faith and conviction). Refer: Krishna’s Gita, 18/42.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284 also.

So in essence, Lord Ram told sage Parashuram that he (Ram) is merely a warrior, but Parashuram is a warrior who is a Brahmin as well. So Parashuram should keep in mind his exalted position and act accordingly. Whatever had happened till now was justified in the light of the fact that it was a face-off between two brave warrior, but Parashuram must realize that his position was unique because besides being a warrior he is also an exalted Brahmin. As a warrior it is alright that he threatened his adversary and opponent (Laxman and Lord Ram) with severe punishment by killing them with his axe for their supposedly misdeeds, but being a Brahmin it is now expected of him that he would put all bitterness behind when his purported enemy has surrendered before him and is ready to put his head on his feet (refer: Chaupai line nos. 3 and 5 that precede Doha no. 282).

Now, Parashuram must exhibit the noble characters of a sage and a Brahmin by forgiving the two brothers and bless them instead.

²The second interpretation would be as follows—For a warrior, his bow is his identity, his insignia and a symbol of his authority. Similarly, for a Brahmin and a sage, his nine noble virtues listed above are his identity, a sign of his moral authority and superiority in society. So, Lord Ram praises sage Parashuram by telling him that he, being a sage and a Brahmin, has as many as nine good qualities in him in addition to his abilities as a warrior which is evident in the form of his axe, bow and arrow.]

सब प्रकार हम तुम्ह सन हारे । छमहु बिप्र अपराध हमारे ॥ ८ ॥

saba prakāra hama tumha sana hārē. chamahu bipra aparādha hamārē. 8.

I* have accepted defeat in every possible way (or, I am inferior to you in all possible way, and I as well as my younger brother Laxman have no intention whatever either to show any disrespect to you or confront you).

So oh Brahmin! I apologise to you and request you to please forgive my faults (by showing tolerance, fortitude, understanding, magnanimity, graciousness and maturity of thought behoving your exalted stature).’ (8)

[*Once again, if the word “Hama” used in the text is technically interpreted to mean a plural pronoun, then Lord Ram includes Laxman in requesting sage Parashuram to pardon them. So, the Lord says—“We have accepted that we are much inferior to you in all possible way and means. Now respected Brahmin, please pardon us for our inadvertent mistakes, for we are but children before you and expect a fatherly treatment from your exalted self.”] (8)

[Note—Lord Ram has asked Parashuram to forgive him and his younger brother by giving two independent reasons. For Laxman the Lord says he should be forgiven because he is an inexperienced child who does not know what to say to whom, and who could not recognize who truly Parashuram was. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 279; (ii) Doha no. 281; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 282.

For himself Lord Ram says that he has always respected Parashuram, never teased him, and considers himself very junior as compared to the exalted stature of the Brahmin sage. Lord Ram even hinted that he has admonished Laxman for his behaviour which is anyhow excusable given his basic nature not to submit to threats and his level of maturity which is still like a child. So he deserves, and must be, pardoned. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 276; (ii) Doha no. 278; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 281; and finally (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 282.]

दो०. बार बार मुनि बिप्रबर कहा राम सन राम ।
बोले भृगुपति सरुष हसि तहूँ बंधु सम बाम ॥ २८२ ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra muni biprabara kahā rāma sana rāma.
bōlē bhr̥gupati saruṣa hasi tahūṁ bandhu sama bāma. 282.

Lord Ram addressed his namesake (i.e. Parashuram) by using honourable epithets such as calling the latter ‘a sage and a hermit’ (“Muni”) or an ‘exalted Brahmin’ (“Bipra-bar”) in order to show respect to Parashuram and try to calm his anger down.

But unfortunately Parashuram took even this show of reverence as an affront and a taunt. So he smiled wryly, and angrily said to Lord Ram—‘You are also as wicked as your brother.’ (Doha no. 282)

[Note—Parashuram has become so biased in his anger that even harmless gestures are taken in the wrong light by him. This episode teaches us that when one is angry, no matter what we do to make him see reason and overcome his anger, the angry person won’t understand anything because of his prejudices.

Parashuram has earlier also accused Lord Ram of being wicked and cunning as the latter purportedly has given his tacit support to Laxman when the latter was answering him back, while pretending to be nice and humble by asking for forgiveness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281.

Angry as he was, he took every gesture and every harmless word as a taunt and insult. Now he has gone beyond limits by interpreting such innocuous words as a 'Brahmin' and a 'sage' as teasing.]

चौ०. निपटहिं द्विज करि जानहि मोही । मैं जस बिप्र सुनावउँ तोही ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nipaṭahim dvija kari jānahi mōhī. maim̐ jasa bipra sunāva'um̐ tōhī. 1.

[Parashuram told Lord Ram—] 'You know me to be merely a Brahmin. What sort of Brahmin I am, I will tell you now.

[In other words, you (Ram) underestimate my potentials and powers, thinking that I am an ordinary Brahmin, and you say you give me respect just by the virtue of my being a Brahmin. But you don't know that I am not an ordinary Brahmin, but someone who stands apart from the run-of-the-mill Brahmins you are talking about. I have certain special qualities in me which I shall enumerate now, and which has set me apart from the rest of the Brahmin race. Therefore, I deserve special treatment even in the community of Brahmins. How dare you show disrespect to me?]

[Note—We see that Parashuram is still not satisfied and wants to brag more of his achievements. A Brahmin's main duty in ancient times was to perform fire sacrifices. A fire sacrifice involves many basic steps. Parashuram uses these steps as metaphors to emphasise that he is a 'Warrior Brahmin', and not one who merely sits around a sacred fire chanting abstract Mantras. When we read the following verse nos. 2-4 we will see that he regards his martial skills and maneuverings in battle as being equivalent to the skills a normal Brahmin has in completing rituals of a fire sacrifice successfully.

Hence, Parashuram wishes to tell Lord Ram that he deserves double respect—one as a Brahmin, and other for being a great warrior, a respect that is usually reserved for a Kshatriya king. In other words, he wants to stress that in the human race he is perhaps the only person who embodies the greatness of a Brahmin as well as of a Kshatriya. Therefore, he deserves to be revered, shown respect to and honoured both as a learned Brahmin who leads the society in religious matters, as well as a Kshatriya who gives protection to the society from being harmed by others.

This observation by Parashuram is motivated by Lord Ram's statement that "in all respects, sage Parashuram is senior to him". Parashuram wants to make it known that he is senior not only because he is born a Brahmin, but also because he possesses grand qualities of great warriors. A born-Brahmin may not always deserve a high degree of respect if he does not live up to the expectations one has from him by the virtue of his birth in the exalted race in which he is born, as is true in the case of Parashuram—because he shows many negative traits that are unwelcome in a Brahmin. For instance, he is notorious for his anger, intolerance, lack of restraint, desire for revenge, haughtiness, boastfulness, killing sprees etc., nothing that behoves of a noble Brahmin. Even Lord Ram has hinted at it in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

So, sage Parashuram tries to defend himself here that he may lack in some of the eclectic qualities of a Brahmin, but he has compensated for them by possessing some other grand qualities that also invite equal respect and honour—such as the qualities and

abilities of a great warrior. A warrior is highly respected by the entire society because he is the one under whose protective umbrella even the Brahmins live in peace.

So in effect Parashuram snubs Lord Ram and scoffs at his statements that he (Ram) is junior to Parashuram—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 282. ‘Yes indeed it is so; what’s new in it’—the angry sage implies to tell the Lord. ‘While you (Lord Ram) are merely a ‘Kshatriya’ prince, I, Parashuram, combine the goodness of a Brahmin as well as a Kshatriya. So how can you compare yourself with me?’

‘Yes indeed’, Parashuram wishes to declare to the assembly while speaking to Lord Ram, ‘I am definitely senior to Lord Ram because I possess the qualities of a warrior, and therefore twice as much honourable and worthy of respect too because I am a Brahmin also! If this is the case, then aren’t the two brothers ashamed of themselves for humiliating me in the way they have done?’]

चाप स्रुवा सर आहुति जानू । कोपु मोर अति घोर कृसानू ॥ २ ॥

समिधि सेन चतुरंग सुहाई । महा महीप भए पसु आई ॥ ३ ॥

मैं एहिं परसु काटि बलि दीन्हे । समर जग्य जप कोटिन्ह कीन्हे ॥ ४ ॥

cāpa sruvā sara āhuti jānū. kōpu mōra ati ghōra kṛsānū. 2.

samidhi sēna caturaṅga suhāī. mahā mahīpa bha'ē pasu āī. 3.

mair̥m ēhir̥m parasu kāṭi bali dīnhē. samara jagya japa kōṭinha kīnhē. 4.

[I, Parashuram, will now describe to you the symbolic fire sacrifice that I do as a Brahmin.] You (Lord Ram) must know and understand that my bow is like the ladle used to offer oblations to the sacred fire, while my arrows are the offerings themselves. My formidable anger is equivalent to the blazing fire of the sacrifice. (2)

The firewood used in this sacrifice (known as the “Samidha”) consists of the four wonderful wings of the army of kings (represented by the horses, the chariots, the elephants and the foot-soldiers, the infantry). The sacrificial animal of the great fire sacrifice that I do is represented by great kings whom I slay in battle. (3)

I have used this battle-axe of mine to kill them to complete my sacrifice, and in this way I have completed countless such sacrifices in the form of battles and wars, all the while muttering sacrificial Mantras (i.e. doing ‘Japa’ or repetition of sacred hymns or formulas) in the form of war cries as part of the ritual.* (4)

[Note—This statement of sage Parashuram is an answer to Laxman and to Lord Ram who have independently told him that his martial appearances as evidenced by his holding of an axe, a bow and an arrow had led Laxman to believe that he was a ‘warrior’. Refer: Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 273; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 282; and (iii) Doha no. 281 respectively.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram has treated him as a mere ‘Brahmin’. Refer: Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 279; (ii) Doha no. 281; (iii) Doha no. 282 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

Besides this, Lord Ram’s advice to Parashuram to discard anger and show mercy at them was also taken in the wrong light by the sage. He regarded this advice as a lecture to him. He wants to justify why he is reluctant to show mercy at anyone whom he challenges for a duel. It is because like other normal run-of-the-mill Brahmins who perform fire sacrifices as part of their religious duty, he too performs a fire sacrifice, but with a difference. He uses his bow as a ladle, his arrow as the offering, his anger as the

raging fire, and the killing of Kshatriya kings with their huge armies as the sacrifice of the animal done during a routine fire sacrifice. Since sacrificing of an animal is a routine part of a fire sacrifice which cannot be completed without this ritual, Parashuram deems it obligatory to 'sacrifice Kshatriya kings' in order to complete the type of sacrifice he has chosen to do.

A very interesting thing is to be observed here. Though Parashuram has not mentioned here in explicit terms, perhaps because he was too agitated to think coherently, a fire sacrifice remains incomplete without the final donation that is to be given to the priests, the Brahmins, who participate in the performance of the fire sacrifice. Well, Parashuram does that too—after the sacrificial ritual in which he chopped-off the heads of kings in the place of animals, he 'donated the earth to Brahmins as gift'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

So Parashuram seems to defend himself from the charge leveled against him that he has been rampaging around the earth killing kings just because he had become arrogant, haughty, blood-thirsty and mad, or because he found sadistic pleasure in it. He gives this justification for his actions by saying that he treats it as a 'religious obligation because for him it is equivalent to doing a fire sacrifice in the conventional way it is done'.

This being the case, he is not sinful or guilty of mass murder or bloodshed by killing Kshatriya kings on the one hand, and of being short-tempered and spouting vitriol, fire and brimstone on the other hand. It is a part of his religious vows; it is the way he has chosen for himself to do the fire sacrifice that a Brahmin must do.

After all, a Brahmin is also guilty of killing an innocent animal during the final rituals of a fire sacrifice when the animal is killed by cutting-off of its head in the name of 'offering of sacrifice'; obviously it is technically a murder of an innocent and helpless creature who is not even given a chance to defend itself. At least Parashuram gives the kings whom he 'sacrifices' a level playing field when he wages a war against them, for they are openly given a chance to either defend themselves or defeat him. In this context any neutral observer would agree that Parashuram was less sinful than other Brahmins who performed fire sacrifice involving killing of animals.

One more important thing comes to the mind in this context. The fire sacrifice was of two types—one that the Brahmins did in their households as a regular form of personal worship of the Fire God, and the other that was organized by kings on large scale as a state affair. Animals were sacrificed in the second type of fire sacrifices—i.e. the one that was organized by kings. The Brahmins were the ones who actually did the rituals, and the king was the patron. The rewards of such sacrifices were deemed to accrue to the kings, and only a minute fraction went to the Brahmin priests because they received monetary rewards in lieu of their efforts. The killing of an innocent animal is a heinous crime and a sinful act by all accounts, and no amount of justifications can condone this act. Since animal sacrifice was a part of such fire sacrifices, those who participated in it, those who actually killed the animal, those who ordered it to be killed, those who financed this crime—in short, everyone involved in this heinous crime was guilty of snuffing out an innocent life. That is, both the patron king as well as the Brahmin priest was equally guilty of murder and bloodshed in the false premise of doing something religious. The king was doubly guilty—because he was instrumental in making the Brahmins commit this crime. Left to themselves, the Brahmins wouldn't have done it, as they do not kill any animal in the personal fire worship they do regularly in their individual households.

If the reward of the fire sacrifice went to the king, the punishment of the crime of killing an innocent, helpless and harmless creature, shrieking for mercy and compassion, too should be of the king. This is one prime reason why Parashuram, on the behalf of the entire Brahmin race, went on killing the kings to punish them for luring the Brahmins to commit the grave crime of killing an animal in the name of a sacrificial ritual.

*Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

One wonders that if Parashuram had killed the Kshatriya kings repeatedly, how come the two great dynasties of the time, i.e. the Raghu dynasty of Ayodhya and the Nimi dynasty of Janakpur survived?

The answer is found in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 242, verse no. 159 where Parashuram has himself told Lord Ram that the descendants of the 'Ikshwaku dynasty' belonged to the line of kings tracing its origin to Parashuram's maternal grandfather. Therefore, he can't kill them. Both these two dynasties, i.e. the Raghu dynasty to which Lord Ram belonged, and the Nimi dynasty to which Sita belonged, were off-shoots of the Ikshwaku dynasty.

In Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Skandha 9, Canto 9, verse nos. 4-5, and Canto 10, verse nos. 1-2, sage Shukdeo says that when Parashuram was on the mission of eliminating all the kings from the surface of earth, a son named 'Moolak' was born to king Ashmak. The ladies hid the son and so he escaped being killed by Parashuram. Later on, he became the progenitor of the new generation of kings. After four-five generations in his line, king Raghu was born. Raghu's son was king Aja, and the latter's son was Dasrath. Lord Ram was Dasrath's son.]

मोर प्रभाउ बिदित नहिं तोरें । बोलसि निदरि बिप्र के भोरें ॥ ५ ॥

भंजेउ चापु दापु बड़ बाढ़ा । अहमिति मनहुं जीति जगु ठाढ़ा ॥ ६ ॥

mōra prabhā'u bidita nahim tōrēm. bōlasi nidari bipra kē bhōrēm. 5.
bhanjē'u cāpu dāpu baṛa bāṛhā. ahamiti manahum' jīti jagu ṭhāṛhā. 6.

You (Lord Ram) are totally unaware of my astounding powers and glories. You call me merely a 'Brahmin' (or, you talk with me as I was merely an ordinary Brahmin). (5)

By breaking the bow you have become very haughty and stand here thinking that you have done some stupendous deed, making you behave as if you have conquered the world!' (6)

[Note—Parashuram means to say that Lord Ram thinks he is a great warrior by breaking a creaky bow, and it has led him to become bold enough to dare to take a stand against the mighty sage by speaking out fearlessly to him and giving excuses for the misdemeanours of his brother, instead of prostrating before the sage and touching his feet, and shaking with fear like the rest of the kings had done when Parashuram had entered the arena—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 269.

That is why Parashuram lists his exploits in the battle-field and says that he has used his 'bow' as the ladle for performing the fire sacrifice symbolized by countless wars.

Parashuram was obliquely hinting at Janak who had got this declaration made by his heralds at the beginning of the bow-breaking ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

राम कहा मुनि कहहु बिचारी । रिस अति बड़ि लघु चूक हमारी ॥ ७ ॥

छुअतहिं टूट पिनाक पुराना । मैं केहि हेतु करौ अभिमाना ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kahā muni kahahu bicārī. risa ati baḍi laghu cūka hamārī. 7.
chu'atahiṁ ṭūṭa pināka purānā. mairi kēhi hētu karauri abhimānā. 8.

Inspite of all the provocations, Lord Ram maintained his poise and calmly said to the angry sage—‘Oh sage, say anything after giving due thought to what you say. Your anger is out of all proportions to the small error that I made.’¹ (7)

The old and worn-out bow broke at my mere touch. Why should or how can I boast of having done anything great, of being brave or valiant?² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram says—“Oh Sage, my small error was that I touched this already fragile, worn-out and rusty bow. I shouldn’t have done it. But since it appeared to be extremely sturdy and hard as was evident when even thousands of kings could not move it a bit, I thought there was no harm in my touching it to get a feel of it and to see how it looks from the underside. But I agree that this was an error, for unfortunately the lifespan of the bow was over and it was I who was to be assigned the infamy of being guilty of breaking Shiva’s bow. Say, oh sage, how can I ever think of causing insult to Lord Shiva by purposely breaking his bow?”

But even as I accept that I did make a mistake of touching this antiquated rusty bow and should have exercised prudence by avoiding it altogether or coming too close to it, your anger is totally uncalled for and out proportion to the damage that was done inadvertently by me. I have repeatedly been pleading with you to forgive us, but you continue to rant and rave. Is this good for you as a Brahmin who needs to practice forgiveness and compassion? Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

²Since I don’t claim to have broken the bow, so where is the question of my boasting of breaking it or of having conquered the world in a symbolic manner by this feat as you accuse me of? The bow was rusty and creaking; it was so fragile that when I touched it to examine it out of curiosity, it just crumbled in my hands, split into two and fell down from my hands. So, I can’t brag of any great deed. Rather, it was a mistake on my part of not being careful enough while handling an antique item; I should have been more careful and alert while examining it. In fact, I should not have touched it at all. I regret it and apologise for it. What more can I do? My brother has also suggested that let us call an expert and get it repaired, but anger is no solution—refer: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

Inspite of all this, you continue to be angry and vengeful. What should I do?”]

दो०. जौं हम निदरहिं बिप्र बदि सत्य सुनहु भृगुनाथ ।
तौ अस को जग सुभटु जेहि भय बस नावहिं माथ ॥ २८३ ॥

dōhā.

jaumi hama nidarahim bipra badi satya sunahu bhr̥gunātha.
tau asa kō jaga subhaṭu jēhi bhaya basa nāvahim mātha. 283.

Listen oh lord of the Bhṛigu’s race, I am telling you the truth. If, as you claim, I am insulting you because you are a Brahmin¹, then tell me which warrior in this world is so great and gallant that I would bow my head before him just out of fear? (Doha no. 283)

[Note—Lord Ram addresses sage Parashuram's misplaced belief and grievance that the former is speaking so boldly with the latter, which the latter has incidentally taken as a deemed affront and an insult to him, because the Lord knows that Parashuram can wrought no harm to him as he (Parashuram) is a Brahmin who cannot stand a fight with a well-trained Kshatriya (the warrior race; here referring to Lord Ram), and also because a Brahmin has the habit of not harming his opponent no matter what the provocation is. This assurance of no personal harm from a Brahmin, in this case sage Parashuram, perhaps has encouraged Lord Ram to be bold enough to speak before the sage. Otherwise, he and his brother Laxman would have outright submitted themselves before the sage without the daring verbal duel that had happened just a while ago.

It is not the case at all, points out Lord Ram. 'I am not insulting you, nor I have even the remotest intention to do so. Now that I have submitted before you and beg you for forgiveness is because you are a Brahmin, and not for any other reason whatsoever. For verily and in all sooth, I am not afraid of you or your might because no warrior worth his salt would bow before his opponent without a fight, no matter how powerful and mighty he may be, and even if he is the God of death himself personified. Therefore, all the hue and cry you have caused are totally uncalled for and irrational. Be sure sage that being a Kshatriya prince I am not scared of you that you might kill me, but I bow before you because you are a revered Brahmin. This being the case, there is no ground for assuming that I am insulting you in any remotest way. So calm down. Any warrior worth his name will never cowardly submit himself before anyone out of fear. If he does submit and lowers his head, then it is out of respect for the other person.'

This was a subtle hint for Parashuram that enough was enough. The sage must not treat Lord Ram's humility and politeness as a sign of weakness, and thereby go on and one with his angry tirade. The time has come to call it quits, and the sage must be practical and stop this nonsense before it is too late.

Well, does the sage not know who Lord Ram actually was? Did he not know that Lord Ram was a personified form of Lord Vishnu? Why, talking of the breaking of Shiva's bow and punishing the person who has broken it, was Parashuram not aware that his Guru, Lord Shiva—whose purported insult caused by breaking of the bow had so much infuriated the sage—had himself been defeated at the hands of Lord Vishnu when the two had fought, and ironically this very bow could not save Shiva from defeat?

Parashuram has gone over his head boasting of his many successes in the battle-field, but if he does not stop then Lord Ram would be forced to recount that incident when he, as Lord Vishnu, had trounced Shiva, and this very bow which has become the bone of contention, could not save Shiva from this humiliating defeat.

This story is narrated in a note appended to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

चौ०. देव दनुज भूपति भट नाना । समबल अधिक होउ बलवाना ॥ १ ॥

जौं रन हमहि पचारै कोऊ । लरहिं सुखेन कालु किन होऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēva danuja bhūpati bhaṭa nānā. samabala adhika hō'u balavānā. 1.
jaurṁ rana hamahi pacārai kō'ū. larahiṁ sukhēna kālu kina hō'ū. 2.

Whether our opponent is a god, a demon, a king or any warrior of whatever denomination, whether he is equivalent to us in strength or superior to us [1], if anyone challenges us in battle then we will gladly face him, even if he is Kaal (the god of death) himself personified the form of the opponent [2]. (1-2)

[Note—Uptil now, Lord Ram has assumed a conciliatory and submissive posture in order to off-set Laxman's bold answers to sage Parashuram, something which had added fuel to the fire of sage's wrathfulness. But unfortunately, Parashuram has treated this as a weakness on the part of the Lord. This is amply proved by the fact that the sage could not either harm Laxman or force him to keep quiet by his threats. Laxman had retorted word-by-word to Parashuram. Vexed and frustrated, Parashuram had to himself quit facing Laxman because he felt that the more he incited the latter the more rebukes will he get. As we have seen in the forgoing narrative, Laxman became quiet not because of any fear of Parashuram but because Lord Ram had ordered him to do so—refer: Doha no. 278.

On the other hand, Lord Ram had been polite towards the sage from the very beginning, so Parashuram vented his suppressed wrath on the Lord. Hence, Lord Ram decided that the sage understands only one language, the language that Laxman had spoken—the language of boldness, fearlessness and harsh retorts, the language of a true warrior. That is, it was useless to be polite and submissive with Parashuram, and the only way to rein him in is to be bold, stand up to him and call off his bluff.

These verses, from Chaupai line no. 1 to 5, were the Lord's stern warning to Parashuram to call it a day and bring this acerbic exchange to an end, because it is a mere waste of time and energy. Parashuram should not think that either Lord Ram or Laxman are afraid to face him in battle; rather they are too willing to teach this haughty sage who happens to have blood of countless kings on his hand and conscience the best and the last lesson of his life! But they are exercising restraint just because he is a Brahmin (Chaupai line no. 5 below).

This answer of Lord Ram is a reply to the brag that Parashuram had made in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 283 herein above. Lord Ram has in effect told Parashuram that he (Ram) does not fear the 'gods' representing the invincible warriors of the heaven, the 'demons' who represent the invincible warriors of the nether world, and the 'kings' etc. who represent the brave warriors on earth.

Parashuram had boasted of defeating the 'kings' who rule over earth (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 283), but here Lord Ram tells him that he does not fear any warrior in creation, and not merely the 'kings'. In other words, Lord Ram pokes fun at Parashuram that the latter could go around wielding his axe on human beings, but was terrified of the demons and the gods upon whom he knew his boast won't work and they would smother him to a past should he challenge any one of them. Parashuram found the human kings an easy target of his blood-thirsty, pervert and revengeful mind because all humans are inherently mortal and under the sway of Kaal, the death god, and have a short lifespan. So, armed with this basic knowledge, he went around sledge-hammering them at will. Besides this, the human kings were easy to defeat because when he fought them they were already demoralized at having to fight a Brahmin, and therefore because they did not want to physically harm Parashuram as he was a 'Brahmin sage', the latter swung his axe on their neck. Lord Ram indirectly tells Parashuram to be ashamed of his disgusting career; it's something to bury one's head in shame than to go about shouting and boasting about it!

If Parashuram was so powerful and strong and invincible, why did he not fight the demons and their king, who in the time of Lord Ram was the famous king of Lanka, the demon king Ravana, or even others such as Banaasur. Again, why did not Parashuram go

and fight Indra, the selfish and highly jealous king of gods? It is because Parashuram feared for his own life.

So Lord Ram tells him to keep quiet and stop boasting. The Lord does not fear either the gods or the demons if they dared to challenge him in battle—quite unlike the pretentious Parashuram.

We shall read below (in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284) that these subtle hints given by Lord Ram led Parashuram to think over the matter, and like all boastful and pretentious persons who are full of wind, he surrendered abjectly at the end, almost as suddenly as a balloon which has been punctured. In this context, refer to what Laxman has said in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.]

छत्रिय तनु धरि समर सकाना । कुल कलंकु तेहि पावँर आना ॥ ३ ॥

कहउँ सुभाउ न कुलहि प्रसंसी । कालहु डरहिं न रन रघुबंसी ॥ ४ ॥

बिप्रबंस कै असि प्रभुताई । अभय होइ जो तुझहि डेराई ॥ ५ ॥

chatriya tanu dhari samara sakānā. kula kalaṅku tēhi pāvamṛa ānā. 3.

kaha'um' subhā'u na kulahi prasansī. kālahu ḍarahim na rana raghubansī. 4.

biprabansa kai asi prabhutāī. abhaya hō'i jō tumhahi ḍērāī. 5.

A person who is a Kshatriya by birth (i.e. who is born in a warrior race) and who fears from entering (fighting in) a battle, such a person is a scar on this (Kshatriya) race and is deemed to be sinful (because he is not living upto his expectations as a warrior, and fulfilling his moral duty as a protector of the society and dignity of its members). (3)

I am not heaping false praises on either this Kshatriya race or my own family known as the Raghu dynasty, but a member of this family (Raghu dynasty to which I belong) does not fear even the 'god of death' known as Kaal if he faces the latter in battle.¹ (4)

But the Brahmin race has such superiority (i.e. glory, mystical powers and majesty) that if someone (i.e. a member of the Kshatriya race) fears or submits himself before one of its members (i.e. any member of the Brahmin race), such as 'you' in the present case, that person becomes fearless; he becomes free from any danger or harm to himself.² (5)

[Note—¹Parashuram had been boasting of his status as being a special class of Brahmin—a 'warrior' Brahmin. These three verses are reply to this brag. Lord Ram essentially tells him that he thinks that the Kshatriya kings whom he had killed all along were afraid of his strength, were weak or something else, but it is not so. They had submitted themselves before him just because he happened to be a Brahmin.

Unfortunately, he (Parashuram) had misinterpreted their submission as their weakness, and instead of pardoning them he had chopped-off their heads. And he thinks that it was an act of bravery and gallantry. What nonsense it is. Lord Ram wants to remove this illusion of gallantry and grandeur from the haughty sage's mind that he is invincible, very powerful and strong, and that the Kshatriya kings are weak and imbecile, that they are impotent and incapable. None of it; a Kshatriya can face even the god of death if the latter challenges the former in battle. The Kshatriya is fearless and strong.

²Here, Lord Ram explains why the members of the Kshatriya race surrendered themselves to sage Parashuram. It was because the latter was a 'Brahmin'. Earlier,

Laxman had also said the same thing—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 273. Even Lord Ram had said a similar thing in Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 282.]

सुनि मृदु गूढ़ बचन रघुपति के । उघरे पटल परसुधर मति के ॥ ६ ॥

sunī mṛḍu gūṛha bacana raghupati kē. ugharē paṭala parasudhara mati kē. 6.

When the ‘holder of the axe’, i.e. sage Parashuram (“parasudhara”), heard these words of Lord Ram, words that were spoken in a sweet tone but which were grave and had a hidden connotation, his mind underwent a dramatic change, with his sub-conscious telling him that there was something very serious and mysterious that does not meet the eye. [That is, the statement of Lord Ram made Parashuram think over the matter seriously, and his sub-conscious warned him that his bluff won’t work here, and therefore it is high time to withdraw before it’s too late for him.] (6)

[Note—We make an interesting discovery here: and it is that the ‘bow’ which Parashuram had held (as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268) was Lord Vishnu’s bow.

Lord Ram had subtly hinted to Parashuram about the special quality of the bow the latter held. In other words, Lord Ram told him that he knew about that bow. In all probabilities, this observation of Lord Ram made Parashuram think that something was mysterious in the entire episode—because otherwise how could Lord Ram know that the bow which Parashuram held had some special quality in it. Parashuram began to wonder—‘Why had Lord Ram singled out the ‘bow’ for such praise, while he Parashuram had all the while been praising his ‘axe’ as his invincible weapon-of-pride?’ Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282.

In the current verses we read that Parashuram’s mind underwent a dramatic change because he had developed doubts about the real identity of Lord Ram. Well, though Parashuram had been shouting and jumping all this time, his mind was working fast behind the scene; he was thinking that it is not an easy thing for someone to break Lord Shiva’s bow. Besides this, even after knowing about his horrifying reputation that he mercilessly slays Kshatriya kings, and more importantly that he was a Brahmin, none of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were afraid of him. So surely there must be something fishy; definitely there must be some hidden reason.

Remember: Sage Parashuram was not an ordinary angry Brahmin sage; he belonged to a line of sages that traces its origin to sage Bhrigu who has been highly praised in the scriptures. Though he is depicted as being haughty and short-tempered, but that does not mean that he was stupid and illiterate. He had studied the scriptures as all Brahmins were expected to do. Therefore, he must have heard or known that Lord Vishnu would come down to earth to eliminate the cruel demons. When the bow of Lord Vishnu that Parashuram had with him was given to him in some ancient time, it was clear to him that it was to serve certain purpose.

Remember: Parashuram had never used this bow of Lord Vishnu; he had waged wars and killed kings by his ‘axe’ alone. This is absolutely clear at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instances, refer: (i) Doha no. 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 275; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 276; (vi) Doha no. 279 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; and (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 283.

The story of this bow is narrated briefly below:—

Vishwakarma, the gods' craftsman, built two bows. One was for Vishnu and the other for Shiva. When Parashuram began learning how to use the bow from his teacher ("Guru"), Lord Shiva, none of the ordinary bows that Parashuram used could withstand his strength; all of them broke when he pulled their strings.

Pleased with his disciple, Lord Shiva gave him his own bow known as 'Pinaak'. But this bow was too strong for Parashuram who couldn't pull its string, and neither did the bow break no matter how hard he pulled at it. So Parashuram did severe Tapa (penance) on Mt. Mahendraachal to propitiate Lord Vishnu. Pleased with his Tapa, Vishnu gave him his own bow called 'Shaarang'.

At that time Lord Vishnu had told him that when he (Vishnu) takes the form of Lord Ram, the purpose of Parashuram's birth will be over, and that this bow would go automatically (migrate; get transferred on its own) to Lord Ram. So, Parashuram was waiting for that moment when Lord Vishnu would come down on earth as Lord Ram to take his bow back.

That is why when Lord Ram referred to this bow as being special, as having nine divine qualities (in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282), Parashuram's ears stood up on their edges. He became alert that something mysterious is there.

In order to test whether Ram was an ordinary prince of Lord Vishnu in a human form, he asked the Lord to take the bow known as 'Shaarang'—refer: verse no. 7 herein below.]

राम रमापति कर धनु लेहू । खैंचहु मिटै मोर संदेहू ॥ ७ ॥

देत चापु आपुहिं चलि गयऊ । परसुराम मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

rāma ramāpati kara dhanu lēhū. khaincahu miṭai mōra sandēhū. 7.
dēta cāpu āpuhiṁ cali gaya'ū. parasurāma mana bisamaya bhaya'ū. 8.

Parashuram addressed Lord Ram and said—'Oh Ram! Take this bow of 'Ramaa-pati' (Lord Vishnu). Hold it and pull its string so that the doubts in my mind are removed. [In other words, I have begun to have doubts about your true identity. I thought that you were some ordinary prince like the rest of the crowd assembled here. But my mind warns me that there is something deeper than what is apparent on the surface. I have this bow of Lord Vishnu with me. Take it and pull it; let me see if you can do it. If you can, then my suspicion is correct—that you are Lord Vishnu, because no one else would be able to hold this bow. Let me find out the truth.]' (7)

Even as Parashuram extended his hands to give the bow that he had held with him to Lord Ram, the bow slid out of his hands and migrated (went) to Lord Ram out of its own accord.

Parashuram was exceedingly amazed and perplexed; his mind was numbed and unable to fathom the import of the developments (for it was now clear to him that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human prince, because had it been so the bow of Lord Vishnu wouldn't have gone willingly to him). (8)

[Note—As has been narrated in the note of verse no. 6 above, this was the test that proved to Parashuram that Lord Ram was indeed Lord Vishnu.

With the passage of the of Lord Vishnu's bow from Parashuram to Lord Ram, all the divine powers that the former possessed migrated to the latter. Remember: Parashuram himself is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu

decided to descend from his heavenly abode at Vaikuntha to earth, his weapon, the Shaarang bow with which he was to kill and eliminate the demons from earth, had to come down somehow. So the Lord devised this clever method—he first gave it to Parashuram who also was one of his many forms, thereby ensuring that the divine bow did not reach wrong hands, and got it back now.

The going of the bow automatically from the hands of Parashuram to Lord Ram is a symbolic transfer of mystical and divine powers from the former to the latter. After this incident, Parashuram remained a humble sage for the rest of his life on earth; all his anger and killing sprees ended.

After this transfer of the bow, Parashuram lost all his glories and strength for which he had boasted so much, becoming a fallen Brahmin who was burdened with a guilty conscience. This is mentioned in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 242, verse nos. 163-164.

So, finally with this development of Lord Vishnu's bow migrating on its own accord from the hands of sage Parashuram to the hands of Lord Ram, the sage realised that the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were not ordinary human princes but the Divine Being in their forms. The sage realised that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, because had it been otherwise the bow of Vishnu wouldn't have gone on its own to Lord Ram. The divine bow has cheerfully gone to its rightful owner and Lord just like a child cheerfully goes in the arms of its parent from the arms of a stranger.

Regretting his confrontationist attitude and the rude way he had behaved with Lord Ram and Laxman, sage Parashuram prayed to the two brothers and asked for forgiveness. We shall read about it in the following verses.]

दो०. जाना राम प्रभाउ तब पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात ।

जोरि पानि बोले बचन हृदयँ न प्रेमु अमात ॥ २८४ ॥

dōhā.

jānā rāma prabhā'u taba pulaka praphullita gāta.

jōri pāni bōlē bacana hṛdayam'na prēmu amāta. 284.

When the bow went automatically to Lord Ram, Parashuram realized the divinity of the Lord. As soon as he understood the reality, his body was thrilled in ecstasy and joy. For now he had realized that he had the good fortune to see Lord Vishnu first hand, right in his front.

He (Parashuram) immediately went into a prayerful mode. He brought together his hands and joined their palms as a gesture of submission and great respect. Then he said (prayed) with a heart bubbling with love and affection for the Lord. (Doha no. 284)

[Note—Parashuram had great respect for Lord Vishnu. Remember: He had done Tapa to please Vishnu, and therefore he knew the might and divinity of the Lord. He was well aware that Vishnu is the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This cosmic form is known as the Viraat Purush. So here he was—standing before the very Lord for whom he had done severe Tapa on Mt. Mahendraachal to get this bow. What more would any devotee want if his revered deity stands before him, so close and unpretentious as Lord Ram had vis-à-vis Parashuram.

Hence, Parashuram considered himself extremely lucky and privileged. He prayed to Lord Ram because now he had realized that the Lord was Vishnu himself.]

चौ०. जय रघुबंस बनज बन भानू । गहन दनुज कुल दहन कृसानू ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jaya raghubansa banaja bana bhānū. gahana danuja kula dahana kṛsānū. 1.

[Sage Parashuram prayed to Lord Ram as follows—] “*Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who gives joy and happiness to the dynasty of king Raghu (of Ayodhya) just like the sun delights a cluster of lotuses¹.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is like a raging fire for the purpose of destruction of the cruel demon race². (1)

[Note—¹The lotus flower opens up its petals as soon as the sun appears in the sky at daytime. It is a sign that the lotus feels cheerful at the sight of the sun, it welcomes the sun, and its delight is seen in the form of the opening of its closed petals. Similarly, Lord Ram gives glory to the exalted dynasty of the kings of Ayodhya.

²Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Ram at the request of the gods and mother earth to eliminate the demons who had become extremely cruel and blood-thirsty. These demons were ruled by Ravana, their king based at the island of Lanka. Just as a fierce fire completely destroys a wild forest, Lord Ram would ultimately eliminate all the cruel demons who had been terrorising innocent creatures of the world.

*The word “Jai” is used as an exclamation to laud someone, to give him praise and honour, to applaud his rare achievements and qualities. The nearest English phrase would be either ‘glory to you’ or the word ‘hail’. Both of them have been used here to completely convey the idea incorporated in the Hindi word “Jai”.

It will be noted that this word “Jai” has been used eight times between verse nos. 1-7, and its derivative word “Jayati” once (in verse no. 3), bringing the total to ‘nine’. This figure is significant in the context of Lord Ram telling sage Parashuram that he (Ram) has only one Guna (quality or virtue) and it is that he is a warrior who holds a bow, while the sage has nine of them or that his bow has nine grand qualities—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Now, once Parashuram recognised who Lord Ram actually was, he wished to express his regrets at the way he had been behaving with the Lord till now on the one hand, and on the other hand he wished to express his reverence for the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram. So the sage used the laudatory word “Jai” nine times to imply that the Lord too has ‘nine’ eclectic qualities for which the Lord had praised him earlier. It’s an indirect way of saying ‘thanks’ to Lord Ram by Parashuram.

Remember: Sage Parashuram is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and therefore if he has ‘nine Gunas’ then surely Lord Ram also has them because the latter is the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. The transfer of Lord Vishnu’s bow, that was with Parashuram till now, to Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 284) is a subtle indication of this fact—that the ‘baton has been passed on from the sixth generation to the seventh one’!

In this context, sage Parashuram praising Lord Ram is a symbolic way of saying that—‘Oh Lord Ram, from now onwards, it is you who will have to take care of those who become unruly and torment the subjects of the kingdom of God. I have kept cruel and selfish kings under tight leash till now, but the situation has changed drastically over

period of time. Instead of those tormentor kings, there are new ones in the form of cruel demons. These demons are beyond my means to control. Hence, please take charge of the earth from now onwards!’

Another reason for Parashuram saying “Jai” nine times is to ask Lord Ram not only to forgive him (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285) but also to bless him that the nine Gunas which he had possessed till now (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282), and which had passed on to Lord Ram along with the transfer of Lord Vishnu’s bow (refer: Doha no. 284 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8), can be restored back to him.

The fact that all the great powers and strength that Parashuram possessed had left him and migrated to Lord Ram is evident when we closely analyse the sage’s behaviour and postures that have undergone a dramatic transformation. Whereas till this point he has been bold and aggressive, flaunting his axe and battle prowess, he has now suddenly become crestfallen, docile, polite, submissive and humble like a true saint. Whereas earlier he was unforgiving, uncompromising and hell-bent for revenge (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 281), now he himself begs to be forgiven (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285).]

जय सुर बिप्र धेनु हितकारी । जय मद मोह कोह भ्रम हारी ॥ २ ॥

jaya sura bipra dhēnu hitakārī. jaya mada mōha kōha bhrama hārī. 2.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is a well-wisher and provider of well-being to the Gods, the Brahmins, and the cows (representing all the docile and humble creatures of the world)¹.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who eliminates the negative traits such as ‘Mada’ (arrogance; haughtiness), ‘Moha’ (worldly attachments and engrossments), ‘Krodha’ (anger; wrathfulness), and ‘Bhram’ (delusions; misconceptions; falsehoods) that may be present in a creature². (2)

[Note—¹The elimination of the demons would certainly delight the Gods, the Brahmins and mother Earth who had assumed the form of a ‘cow’ to approach Lord Vishnu to protect her from the terror unleashed by the demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 184, and Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it.

²Sage Parashuram means that he was so grateful to Lord Ram that the Lord had removed these four negative qualities that had eclipsed his mind and heart till now. Parashuram had all these four negativities in him—(i) he was arrogant and haughty; (ii) he was attached to the gross things of the world as evident from his affection for the bow and his getting so annoyed at its breaking that he wanted to kill the person who had done it, without taking into account that this killing would make the would-be bride a widow in a premature manner because the groom would be killed; (iii) he was anger personified; and (iv) he was gravely under the influence of delusions, not realising that breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow cannot be the job of a human being.]

बिनय सील करुना गुन सागर । जयति बचन रचना अति नागर ॥ ३ ॥

binaya sīla karunā guna sāgara. jayati bacana racanā ati nāgara. 3.

Oh Lord, you are an ocean of the great virtues (“Guna Sagar”) of politeness, good manners, courteousness, mercy, compassion, and all other good qualities in this world¹.

I praise the glory of the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is an expert in the use of proper words and whose speech is extremely well thought of and sweet². (3)

[Note—¹The sage has now realised how calm Lord Ram had remained throughout the episode. So the great sage now praises Lord Ram for the dignified and responsible way the latter had behaved and tackled the situation.

In spite of all provocations, Lord Ram had maintained his dignity, had spoken with great respect for the sage, and had been very polite and courteous towards him (for instance, refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; Doha no. 281 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 282; and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283).

Lord Ram had even asked for forgiveness on behalf of his naughty brother Laxman (refer: Doha no. 276 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it), and instead of using stern words to ask Laxman to stop confronting the sage, the Lord had politely signalled him to keep quiet by mere furrowing of his eyebrows (refer: Doha no. 278).

²In this praise, Parashuram refers to the diplomatic way Lord Ram had tackled him and his anger (for instance, refer: from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 281—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 282), and at the same time had informed him who he (Ram) actually was (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 282; Doha no. 283; and Doha no. 284 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8).]

सेवक सुखद सुभग सब अंगा । जय सरीर छबि कोटि अनंगा ॥ ४ ॥

sēvaka sukhada subhaga saba aṅgā. jaya sarīra chabi kōṭi anaṅgā. 4.

Oh Lord, you give delight, happiness and joy to all your followers and servants (the literal meaning of the word “Sevak”, but in practice it refers to the devotees of the Lord)¹. Your whole body, i.e. your physical form with all its parts,² is divine and auspicious.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him whose body embodies the beauty and magnificence of millions of Kamdeos (cupids)³. (4)

[Note—¹When Ravana’s brother Vibhishan decided to go and surrender before Lord Ram, he was sure that the Lord would accept him as he always gives happiness to his followers and devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 42.

When king Manu and his wife Satrupa had done Tapa, and Lord Vishnu revealed himself before them, Manu had also prayed to the Lord saying that “the Lord is like a evergreen tree for his servants and followers”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 146.

²This observation refers to the principle advocated by the scriptures that all gross visible forms of this creation have some kind of worldly fault in them. If this is the established norm then one will be inclined to believe that even the gross form of a human being that the Supreme Being had assumed in the form of Ram must also have some or the other negative traits that are universally present in all the living beings who have a gross body.

To remove this misgiving regarding Lord Ram, sage Parashuram says that inspite of the Lord having a physical body like all other human beings, his form is nevertheless divine and holy like a consecrated image in a temple. This image that is worshipped in temples is made of a gross material, such as a piece of stone, wood or precious metal. But for the worshipper it represents the Supreme Lord, the Holy God before whom the whole world bows. Likewise, Lord Ram's physical form as a human being does not have the worldly grossness that is universally associated with all living beings in this mortal world.

³The physical form or image of Lord Ram is so attractive and captivating because it embodies in its self the beauty of Nature. All those who see him are simply charmed by his form. There are countless instances spread throughout Ram Charit Manas eulogizing the magnificence of the Lord's image or form. Some of the instances in Baal Kand are the following—(i) Doha no. 218 where sage Vishwamitra endorses this fact when he gives permission to Lord Ram and Laxman to go and see the city of Janakpur; (ii) Doha no. 233 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 where Sita is swept off her feet by the Lord's fabulous image; (iii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221 which narrate how the women folk of Janakpur were enchanted by the beauteous sight of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50 where even Lord Shiva was enthralled by the lovely beauty of Lord Ram; and (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 199 that refers to the beauty of Lord Ram as a child, a beauty that was like an image formed from millions of Kamdeos.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327 that describe the fabulous beauty of Lord Ram as a groom.

Even the demons had accepted that Lord Ram's charm was matchless—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 19 where the demons Khar and Dushan were simply stunned at the Lord's beauty and did not initially want to harm him.

And finally we may cite another example of how the crow saint Kaagbhusund, who had gone to Ayodhya to play with Lord Ram as a child, was exceedingly delighted by the Lord's charming form, filling his eyes full with this wonderful image—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Further, sage Kaagbhusund also reiterates that Lord Ram's form embodies the charm of millions of Kamdeos (cupids)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76.

When king Manu and his wife Satrupa did Tapa (penance) to have Lord Vishnu as their son, they had visualized the divine form of the Lord which was exceptionally charming and enthralling for the heart—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 146.

करौं काह मुख एक प्रसंसा । जय महेस मन मानस हंसा ॥ ५ ॥

karauri kāha mukha ēka prasansā. jaya mahēsa mana mānasa hansā. 5.

Oh Lord! How can I praise you with a single mouth? [That is, even if I had thousands of mouths I won't have been able to sufficiently praise you and your glories.]¹

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who floats like a divine Swan in the lake of Lord Shiva's heart². (5)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was going to the marriage venue for the formal rituals of marriage, the same idea is conveyed there also. Lord Shiva feels privileged that he can see the Lord with his fifteen eyes (5 heads x 3 eyes in each = 15); Brahma the creator is happy that he can see the Lord with his four heads (i.e. 4 heads x 2 eyes in each = 8 eyes); Indra, the king of gods, is very happy that he has thousands of holes on his body through which he can see the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 317.

At the time of Lord Ram's birth, the patron goddess of speech, known as Saraswati, had failed to find words to describe the celebrations of the time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246 where the good kings have declared that the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, live in the heart of Lord Shiva.

As regards comparing Lord Ram and Laxman with Swans, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 221 where this fact is also endorsed by the women folk of Janakpur.]

अनुचित बहुत कहेउँ अग्याता । छमहु छमामंदिर दोउ भ्राता ॥ ६ ॥

anucita bahuta kahē'um' agyātā. chamahu chamāmandira dō'u bhrātā. 6.

I (Parashuram) have said many inappropriate things out of my ignorance and delusions.

Oh you two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), please forgive me because both of you are like oceans of forgiveness and forbearance.*

[*This verse can be read differently also as follows—“You two brothers are like oceans of the virtues of forgiveness and forbearance. Hence, I request you (or, plead with you) to forgive me for my impertinence and irreverence because I have said many things to you out of my utter ignorance and delusions that I should not have uttered at all otherwise.”] (6)

[Note—Parashuram's anger and bad temper, his vanity, ego, arrogance and haughtiness, his habit of boasting of his exploits, especially of the negative sort—after all, going around killing kings indiscriminately is definitely an abhorable thing to do for someone who calls himself a 'sage' belonging to an illustrious family of luminary sages descending from the legendary sage Bhrigu—had all contributed to delude his mind and make him hallucinate. It led to his final downfall so much so that not only he became an object of ridicule in the world but he also decimated all the religious merits he had accumulated till now by doing various types of Tapa (austerities and penances) and Yagya (fire sacrifices).

This episode teaches us a lesson as to how anger forces even a wise man to act in an irresponsible manner and say things which only go against him. Had Parashuram not lost his temper, and instead had acted wisely, patiently and in a practical way, he would not have had to reach a piquant situation where he will be forced to surrender suddenly and abjectly before someone whom he had been threatening with a kill just a few moments earlier. What more humiliation can a person face than to submit himself abjectly, to surrender unconditionally, and to ask for forgiveness from a person whom he had declared as his arch enemy and had publicly threatening to kill him.

When Lord Ram and Laxman were begging Parashuram to forgive them and calm down, the latter had been scornful and pouring fire and brimstone at them. And now the same Parashuram has asked for forgiveness. What a 'turn-of-tables'!

We have read earlier that Laxman had warned Parashuram that anger is a bad thing because it impels a person to commit sins or get involved in wrongdoings for which he has to regret later on. Here we see that Parashuram accepts that he had said many inappropriate things out of ignorance and delusions. But why did he say such things? It was because he was ‘angry’ at the person who had broken the bow. He wanted retribution; he wanted revenge. In anger he lost control over himself. He acted in a rash manner, shouting, threatening, wielding his axe, using abrasive language, and so on.

The angry sage had threatened to kill both the brothers. For Laxman he had a justification—and it was that he (Laxman) had all along adopted a confrontationist attitude—refer for instance, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 274 where Parashuram points out this fact to sage Vishwamitra, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 275 where Parashuram addresses the assembly to point out that he has been sparing Laxman but the latter continues to tease him; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 277, and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 279 where the sage clearly told Lord Ram that Laxman is misbehaving with him.

But even while rebuking Parashuram, Laxman had a smile on his face, and did not have a bitter scowl like Parashuram had sported. A smile acts as a sweetener that blunted the sharpness of the words Laxman had used. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 273; (iii) Doha no. 277; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280.

Earlier, Laxman had even offered to get the bow repaired by calling in experts—Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

The sage, meanwhile, had been continuously threatening Laxman with murder, and had used insulting words for him. For instance, refer: (a) Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 271; (ii) Doha no. 272; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; and (iv) Doha no. 279 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 which describes Parashuram threatening Laxman with murder.

Then, in the following instances we find that Parashuram has used abrasive language for Laxman—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 272 (the use of the word “Satha”); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 274 (many words that essentially describe Laxman as very wicked, pervert, a taint for his family, in the jaws of death, unruly, reckless, stupid and ignorant); (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275 (one who speaks scorchingly, whose words are biting and corrosive); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 277 (having a mouth full of poison; very crooked); (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 278 (having a pervert heart and mind; being like a golden pitcher filled with the most ferocious poison); and (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 280 (“Khot”—defective, faulty, ill-humoured and ill-witted, pervert and corrupted).

But there was no justification for Parashuram threatening Lord Ram repeatedly inspite of the Lord’s submission that he was sorry for what had happened, begging for forgiveness, using of polite words, praising the sage’s glory, and even signalling Laxman to keep quiet. Lord Ram had been extremely courteous with the sage; he was very apologetic for the breaking of the bow, saying that he had no intention of breaking it, but that it split into two on its own when he (Ram) was examining it because it was old and worn-out. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 284.

The result was that sage Parashuram had made a joke of himself in a crowded assembly.

One important point to note here is that sage Parashuram’s prayer is the only one in the whole book of Ram Charit Manas where the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, are offered prayers together.]

कहि जय जय जय रघुकुलकेतू । भृगुपति गए बनहि तप हेतू ॥ ७ ॥

kahi jaya jaya jaya raghukulakētū. bhr̥gupati ga'e banahi tapa hētū. 7.

Saying, 'Hail Lord Ram who is like a 'flag' (i.e. the most prominent member; one who stands out from the rest; one who gives glory to others; one who is the flag-bearer of the family's glory, name and fame) in the illustrious dynasty of king Raghu! Glory to Lord Ram who is the flag-bearer representing the greatness of the dynasty of king Raghu!! Hail Lord Ram, and glory to him!!!'*

[*Sage Parashuram has hailed Lord Ram and his glory three times to emphasise the greatness of the Lord. He has addressed the Lord as "Raghu-kul-ketu" to stress that Lord Ram is the most illustrious member of the great family of kings descending from Raghu.]

After thus praying to Lord Ram and begging for forgiveness from him, 'Bhr̥gupati'¹ (sage Parashuram) went away to the forest to do Tapa (to do penance for his misbehaviour with the Lord, as well as to regain his lost mystical powers and glory that were decimated by his unholy behaviour).² (7)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that in both the cases of Lord Ram as well as sage Parashuram, the great families to which they belonged has been cited. For Lord Ram, the 'Raghu dynasty' is invoked, and for sage Parashuram the luminary sage 'Bhr̥gu and his family' are referred to.

Hence, while Lord Ram is said to be like a 'flag', i.e. the most prominent member, one who represents the dignified status of the family of king Raghu, sage Parashuram is said to be the 'chief' of sage Bhr̥gu's exalted family. Both the terms 'flag' and 'chief' imply the same thing—that the concerned person is superior to others in the family.

There were so many kings in the Raghu dynasty, but Lord Ram's life and deeds stood out as being exemplary, and the Lord was remembered for all times to come by all the living beings in this world. Similarly, sage Parashuram had made himself famous on two counts—one was by his earlier deeds about which he had himself boasted in the aforesaid episode, and two by his meeting Lord Ram and transferring his mystical powers to the Lord by the symbolic transfer of Lord Vishnu's bow (Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284).

In other words, of all the numerous members of these two families, the ones who are remembered even today by a common man are Lord Ram and sage Parashuram.

Refer also to (a) Dohawali, verse nos. 431-433; (b) Janki Mangal, verse no. 178; (c) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 22.

²It is not mentioned here where sage Parashuram had gone to do Tapa. But according to sage Valmiki's epic 'Ramayan', Parashuram had gone to a mountain named 'Mahendra'—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 22.

In Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, it is mentioned that Parashuram went to the abode of Lords Nar-Narayan, now known as Badrinath, in the Himalayas.

It is to be noted that though it is not explicitly mentioned that Lord Ram and Laxman had forgiven Parashuram, but it is deemed to be so. This is based on the premise of sage Parashuram himself when he says that the two brothers are "oceans of forgiveness and forbearance"—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above.

Remember: Lord Ram has a unfaltering nature of showing grace and mercy upon his "Sevaks", i.e. those who surrender themselves before him like a servant does to his

master. There are numerous instances of this: for example, Hanuman tells this fact to Vibhishan when the two met in Lanka where Hanuman had gone to search for Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 6.

Another important question is this: How was Parashuram's sins overcome or neutralised? Lord Ram has himself declared that when anyone surrenders himself before the Lord and asks for his protection and refuge, the Lord forgives all his sins and misdeeds, and the person becomes free from all the evil consequences of his wrong-doings. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48. Here, the Lord has made these observations when Vibhishan had come to seek refuge with the Lord after being kicked out of Lanka by his own brother, the demon king Ravana.]

अपभयँ कुटिल महीप डेराने । जहँ तहँ कायर गवँहिं पराने ॥ ८ ॥

apabhayam' kuṭila mahīpa ḍērānē. jaham' taham' kāyara gavam'him parānē. 8.

The wicked kings were seized with imaginary fears, while the coward amongst them stealthily fled away from there. (8)

[Note—What was their fear? Well, before sage Parashuram had arrived, these wicked and pervert kings had threatened to capture Sita and put the two brothers in shackles. They had threatened to defeat king Janak in battle if he took their side. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266 herein above.

So now they were terrified out of their wits. They thought that Laxman would divert his suppressed anger for Parashuram towards them, and would single-handedly punish them for what they had said earlier as referred to above.

More than anyone else—and that includes even Lord Ram whom they had observed to be very polite and civil during the confrontation with Parashuram—they feared the wrath of Laxman who had shown publicly that he fears not even the mighty sage Parashuram before whom these kings had trembled and prostrated out of fear for their dear lives as is clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 269.

Some of these kings preferred to show a brave face by pretending that they had conceded defeat and had remained behind to witness, to participate in and enjoy the grand marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. But some of them were totally cowards; they scampered out quickly, fearing reprisals.

These wicked kings had felt happy when they had earlier watched the angry sage Parashuram threatening king Janak to divulge the name of the person who had broken the bow, and if he failed to do so the sage would turn his kingdom upside down—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 270.

Now when the tables were turned in favour of Lord Ram and Laxman, these pervert kings 'imagined' that they would be captured and thrown into prison. But their fears were unfounded because both Lord Ram and Laxman were "oceans of forgiveness"—refer: 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 above. Hence it is said that they had 'imaginary fears'.]

दो०. देवन्ह दीन्हीं दुंदुभीं प्रभु पर बरषहिं फूल ।
हरषे पुर नर नारि सब मिटी मोहमय सूल ॥ २८५ ॥

dōhā.

dēvanha dīnhīm dundubhīm prabhu para baraṣahīm phūla.
haraṣē pura nara nāri saba miṭi mōhamaya sūla. 285.

The gods immediately sounded their musical instruments known as the kettle-drums and showered flowers on the Lord (from the sky).

All the citizens of Janakpur, the men and the women folks, became delighted and happy. All their consternations, fears, agonies and perplexities having their origin or basis on ignorance were eliminated. [There was cheer and joy everywhere, both in the heaven as well as in the city.] (Doha no. 285)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 270 that says the same thing.

Now, what were the citizens and the gods afraid of? They were afraid of what Parashuram may do in his fit of anger. Remember that the sage had threatened to “turn the earth upside down as far as the kingdom of Janak extended”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 270. It would mean a catastrophe of an unprecedented scale. Everything would be reduced to rubble.

Then they also feared for the security of Lord Ram and Laxman whom the citizens had begun to love, admire and adore very much by now. Sage Parashuram’s reputation as an angry and merciless killer was well known. The fear was aggravated by the fact that Laxman was pouring fuel to the sage’s fire of anger by his rebukes.

So when the sage surrendered and offered his apologies to the two brothers, the gods and the humans alike felt as if the brilliant sun has emerged from behind the thick veil of dark doomsday cloud, removing the foreboding darkness symbolizing death and destruction to give a fresh light of happiness and joy to the world.]

चौ०. अति गहगहे बाजने बाजे । सबहिं मनोहर मंगल साजे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ati gahagahē bājanē bājē. sabahīm manōhara maṅgala sājē. 1.

There was a thunderous noise of musical instruments of all sorts being played together. Everyone (i.e. the citizens as well as the members of the royal household) enthusiastically displayed their happiness by putting out whatever charming and auspicious things that they had (to celebrate the occasion and to rejoice that the last vestiges of hurdles created by malignant stars were removed when sage Parashuram had surrendered and went away to the forest after praying to Lord Ram). (1)

[Note—When Lord Ram had broken the bow, there was universal rejoicing and playing of musical instruments—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Again, when Sita had put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, there was a repeat of the tumult of musical instruments, singing and dancing—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 264—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265.

But soon this atmosphere of merriment and rejoicing turned sombre and grave because of two reasons—(i) the first was that the wicked and frustrated kings had created a ruckus and were readying for battle, and then (ii) immediately thereafter the angry sage Parashuram burst in, threatening menacingly to spill blood. Refer respectively to Ram

Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line 7 that precedes Doha no. 267; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 270.

Now the situation had once again turned favourable, and it did so with a bang—because not only the danger posed by the determination of sage Parashuram, who had the notorious reputation of killing anyone who annoyed him in the least, to punish Lord Ram and Laxman had passed away, the other danger that was posed by the would-be trouble makers, the wicked kings who were earlier getting restive for a bloody showdown to avenge their humiliation and defeat, also vanished when they scampered out of the arena in a hurry to save their lives after they watched sage Parashuram surrendering before the Lord.

Hence, with all dangers and obstacles to the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita being finally removed, the rejoicing and celebrations resumed with renewed vigour.]

जूथ जूथ मिलि सुमुखि सुनयनीं । करहिं गान कल कोकिलबयनीं ॥ २ ॥

jūtha jūtha mili sumukhi sunayanīm. karahīm gāna kala kōkilabayanīm. 2.

A large number of ladies gathered together and formed groups to sing auspicious songs with pleasant voices. They had sweet faces and beautiful eyes. (2)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263 where it is narrated that the women folk sang auspicious songs as soon as the bow was broken.]

सुखु बिदेह कर बरनि न जाई । जन्मदरिद्र मनहुँ निधि पाई ॥ ३ ॥

sukhu bidēha kara barani na jāī. janmadaridra manahum' nidhi pāī. 3.

The happiness and delight of Janak was so great that it is not possible to describe it. His ecstasy and joy was like that of a man who had been a pauper since birth but has suddenly found an unexpected trove of treasure. (3)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 where another analogy of a man in water suddenly finding land is cited to give an idea of the happiness of Janak. Well, this was expected because he was the father of Sita, and any father would naturally be happy when his daughter's marriage goes to completion smoothly and according to his wishes.]

बिगत त्रास भइ सीय सुखारी । जनु बिधु उदयँ चकोरकुमारी ॥ ४ ॥

bigata trāsa bha'i sīya sukhārī. janu bidhu udayam' cakōrakumārī. 4.

All mental and emotional torments, perplexities and uncertainties that Sita was suffering from were also instantly dispelled, and she was very happy and exhilarated just like the case of a young female Chakor bird feeling delighted when the full moon rises. (4)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 263 where another analogy of the female bird known as ‘Chataki’ feeling contented when a rain drop falls in its open beak during the asterism of Swati.

The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. It is said to be so enamoured of the moon that as soon as the moon rises in the eastern sky, the bird fixes its gaze on it and goes on looking at the disc of the full moon as it travels across the sky and sets in the west. The bird feels extremely ecstatic when it sights the moon. This analogy means that Sita had got what she had been longing for: that all hurdles are removed and she is happily married to Lord Ram. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.]

जनक कीन्ह कौसिकहि प्रनामा । प्रभु प्रसाद धनु भंजेउ रामा ॥ ५ ॥

मोहि कृतकृत्य कीन्ह दुहुँ भाई । अब जो उचित सो कहिअ गोसाईं ॥ ६ ॥

janaka kīnha kausikahi pranāmā. prabhu prasāda dhanu bhañjē'u rāmā. 5.
mōhi kṛtakṛtya kīnha duhum' bhā'īm. aba jō ucita sō kahi'a gōsā'īm. 6.

Now, king Janak bowed before sage Vishwamitra (“Kaushik”) and said cheerfully—‘Oh sage! It is by your grace and blessings that Ram has broken the bow. (5)

The two brothers had done me a great favour and have obliged me a lot. [In other words, I thank them very much and feel grateful to them.]

Now, oh lord, tell me what is the proper thing to do (so that I can take the next step and prepare for the finalization of the marriage between Ram and Sita as per your advice).’ (6)

[Note—King Janak has shown his respects to the sage as it is a tradition as well as courteousness that one must honour elders for any achievements. Remember: It was sage Vishwamitra who had expressly ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow so that the grief and worries of Janak are removed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254. So Janak must thank the sage first before he thanked Lord Ram for removing his worries by breaking the bow.

Besides this expression of formal courteousness by Janak, the fact remains that even Lord Ram had also sought sage Vishwamitra’s blessings ‘three times’ before he broke the bow because the sage was his Guru. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 255; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261.

He expressed his thankfulness to Laxman because the latter had stood up and objected to Janak declaring the competition closed when none of the kings had been able to move the bow, claiming the right to break the bow. With his bold initiative, Laxman had saved the day for Janak when the latter had lost all hopes of getting Sita married. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Doha no. 253.

Not only this, when the angry sage Parashuram had threatened to turn the earth upside down and punish the person who had broken the bow, Laxman had faced him boldly and with his stance had put the sage on the backfoot. This entire episode is narrated above in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 284.]

कह मुनि सुनु नरनाथ प्रबीना । रहा बिबाहु चाप आधीना ॥ ७ ॥
 टूटतहीं धनु भयउ बिबाहू । सुर नर नाग बिदित सब काहू ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni sunu naranātha prabīnā. rahā bibāhu cāpa ādhīnā. 7.
 tūṭatahīm dhanu bhaya'u bibāhū. sura nara nāga bidita saba kāhū. 8.

The sage (Vishwamitra) told the king—‘Listen oh wise and expert king¹. The marriage was tied to the bow (i.e. it was subject to and dependent upon the breaking of the bow). (7)

As soon as the bow was broken, the marriage was deemed to have taken place. This is an open fact, and is known to all—the gods (in the heaven), the humans (on earth), and the serpents (underground). [In other words, the fact that the marriage between Lord Ram and Sita was finalized at the instant the bow was broken is an established fact. Everyone is aware of it; all the three worlds represented by the gods in the heaven, the human beings on earth, and the serpents representing the subterranean world, are aware of it.]² (8)

[Note—¹The sage has called king Janak ‘wise and expert’ (“Praveena”) to mean that though the king knew what to do, what was proper, and so on and so forth, he still was seeking advice from the sage just to show respect to him. Besides this, Janak had his own priest by the name of Satanand. The latter was a competent priest and must have already advised king Janak on every minute detail of the preparations for marriage. So, if Janak seeks advice from sage Vishwamitra in this context then it is surely a formality and an expression of respect for him.

Janak was wise also because he knew how to interact with a ‘guest sage’, because Vishwamitra was his guest.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265 which is very explicit on this point.]

दो०. तदपि जाइ तुह करहु अब जथा बंस व्यवहारु ।
 बूझि बिप्र कुलबृद्ध गुर बेद बिदित आचारु ॥ २८६ ॥

dōhā.

tadapi jā'i tumha karahu aba jathā bansa byavahāru.
 būjhi bipra kulabṛd'dha gura bēda bidita ācāru. 286.

(Sage Vishwamitra told Janak--) In spite of this (that the marriage has already taken place as soon as the bow broke), you can go ahead with the formal preparations and follow the traditions of your family and race.

Consult the Brahmins of your kingdom, the elders in your family, and your Guru (Satanand), and after that do according to their advice, keeping in mind the norms laid down in the Vedas and other scriptures for such occasions. (Doha no. 286)

[Note—Acknowledging the king's gracefulness, sage Vishwamitra too reciprocated with equal graciousness by thanking Janak for seeking his advice but then telling him politely

that he must ask the seniors in his family, the Brahmins of the kingdom, and his Guru, and act according to their advice. This simple gesture of Vishwamitra made him friendly to all other seniors in Janakpur.

But since Janak has sought his advice, sage Vishwamitra gave one personal one—that the king must send a messenger to Ayodhya and call king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, to attend the marriage ceremony, because it is a norm that the groom's parents must be present during his marriage.

Why did Vishwamitra choose to give this advice which is very obvious? Well, he had doubts that in the sort of marriage devised for Sita, the winning competitor is married-off immediately as soon as the condition set for the marriage is fulfilled, even if none of the family members of the groom can attend. If it is found necessary, the formality of doing various rituals and elaborate ceremonies is observed at a later date. This is clearly hinted when Vishwamitra says “the marriage had taken place as soon as the bow was broken”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha no. 286; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 265.

It was also possible, thought sage Vishwamitra, that the bride's side would insist that since he was present on the occasion, he should assume the role of Lord Ram's father and complete the rituals on king Dasrath's behalf. The sage wouldn't have been able to deny this role, especially because Dasrath had himself told him, at the time of handing over the two brothers to the sage, that for all practical purposes he (Vishwamitra) was their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208.

But sage Vishwamitra was so gracious that he did not wish that king Dasrath be denied the privilege and joy of witnessing the marriage of his beloved son, Lord Ram.

Besides the above reason, the majesty, pomp, pageantry and ceremony of the occasion would be enhanced manifold times when two great kings joined hands and stood side-by-side to participate in the festivities. Otherwise this rare occasion would lack in its glamour and magnificence by half.

So, in order to pre-empt this possibility, he specifically asked Janak to send a messenger to Ayodhya and call king Dasrath—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. दूत अवधपुर पठवहु जाई । आनहिं नृप दसरथहि बोलाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

dūta avadhapura paṭhavahu jāī. ānahiṁ nṛpa dasarathahi bōlāī. 1.

(Sage Vishwamitra advised king Janak—) ‘Send a messenger to Ayodhya with an invitation for king Dasrath, and let that messenger bring the king here (to attend the marriage of his son Ram).’ (1)

[Note—Refer note of Doha no. 286 herein above.

Besides the reason given in the above referred note, there were other considerations in the mind of sage Vishwamitra also which prompted him to make this specific request to Janak.

One consideration was that Dasrath was a ‘bigger’ king as compared to Janak. With ‘bigger’ we mean that Dasrath that he was a “Charavarti King”, a king who was equivalent to an Emperor because he had a number of kings under his dominion—refer:

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 which explicitly honours Dasrath as being a 'Chakravarti King'.

There are other instances also where it is clearly stated that the majesty of Dasrath as a great king, one who possessed the same honour that an emperor possesses, was unmatched in the whole world. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 2 it is said that "all the kings were eager to have his favour and sought his blessings; they were all desirous of being in his good looks; and that there was no one more privileged and fortunate in the whole world consisting of three levels (heaven, earth and nether worlds) than Dasrath". The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 173.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 320 it is declared that the gods acknowledged that both Janak and Dasrath were of equal stature and glory.

The other consideration was that may be Janak would not like to give Dasrath the trouble of coming to Janakpur because of the great distance involved in travelling between the cities of Ayodhya and Janakpur.

The third reason of why Janak had not invited Dasrath to attend the bow breaking ceremony that was organised to solemnise the marriage of Janak's daughter Sita seems to be very stark. It is this: The chances were high that Dasrath would refuse to come to attend the same marriage ceremony because he might have felt offended by not being invited along with other great kings of the earth. So, sage Vishwamitra wanted to ensure that this omission on the part of Janak should not act as a thorn and mar the future of cordial relationship between Janak and Dasrath, especially when Janak's daughter is married to Dasrath's son. When Dasrath would come to know that the invitation to come to Janakpur had the backing of sage Vishwamitra, he would never refuse to come—though of course he might have thought twice if only Janak had invited him at this late stage.

This understood, we shall now discuss why Janak apparently avoided or refrained from inviting Dasrath to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

Well, the answers to this question are easy to deduce by application of simple logic based on the events mentioned in the Ramayan, though nowhere in the epic a precise reason is to be found that would address this query.

(i) First and foremost is that Janak had not sent any specific invitation to any particular king, prince or emperor to come and attend the bow-breaking ceremony. He had made a general proclamation to the effect that his daughter would be married to anyone who would lift and break the bow, and had sent heralds to all the seven continents to make known this intention of his so that all those interested could come. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7.

Of course he may have sent specific letters of invitation to those kings or princes with whom he had personal ties, such as his relatives etc., or official ties such as some sort of strategic diplomatic or military alliances. But surely such invitations must have been limited. This fact is borne out when we closely scrutinize the verses of Ram Charit Manas that tell us about the guests and competitors who had assembled at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, and Janak's own declaration at that time. Those who came included 'demons' and 'gods' besides human kings and princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251. Then we learn that even the demon kings Ravana and Banasur had also come—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precede Doha no. 256.

Any human father in his senses would not invite ‘demons’ and ‘gods’ to come and marry his daughter. Marrying ‘gods’ was tantamount to sending his daughter to premature death because gods do not live on earth; they live in heaven where one goes only after death. Besides this, gods do not have a physical body whereas the bride is a human being. Similarly, ‘demons’ as a race are evil, cruel, sinful, ugly, blood thirsty and hated by the world, and say which father would ever imagine that his loving daughter would become a wife of such a person?

Then we also find that bad, immoral and pervert kings had come to attend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Doha no. 250 and its following Chaupai line no. 1; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 266; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285. Obviously, no father would willingly invite such people

Therefore in all probabilities his heralds had gone to the kingdom of Ayodhya but its king, Dasrath, decided not to come.

(ii) Even if we assume that Janak had purposely not invited Dasrath to the bow-breaking ceremony or had instructed his heralds not to go to Ayodhya, then there must have been a reason behind this decision of Janak. What was that reason? Let us now analyze them.

(a) Dasrath had a severe curse dangling on his head like a deadly sword. This curse essentially said that ‘he would die pitifully grieving for his son’. This curse was cast on him by a blind hermit couple whose son named Srawan-kumar had been mistakenly killed by an arrow shot by Dasrath when he had gone out hunting. This episode is briefly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 155, and in detail in Veda Vyas’ narration of this epic story in his ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 19-47, especially in verse no. 45 where Dasrath mentions this curse.

This rang an alarm bell in the mind of Janak, and he was afraid that if he invites Dasrath and the latter sends his son to attend the bow-breaking ceremony, or brings him along if he decides to come personally himself, and then this prince successfully breaks the bow, then Janak would have to marry his daughter Sita with him according to his own declaration. With a strong possibility of some danger coming to the would-be groom in the context of the aforesaid curse on Dasrath which meant that he would have to die a death while grieving for his son, it would be willfully creating a situation on the part of Janak where his daughter would be surely widowed. Naturally this very thought made Janak decide not to take any risk, and therefore not to invite Dasrath altogether.

This is the primary reason also why Janak had refrained from inviting Lord Ram to try his luck at breaking the bow, especially when all the other kings had failed to do so and his daughter’s future was doomed because now she would have to live unmarried throughout her life, something that was no less than a severe curse both for the girl as well as for her father and his family. Janak had gone to the extent of declaring that he would prefer that his daughter remain unmarried because no one could break the bow than invite ridicule and ignominy by breaking his words and marrying her in violation of his declaration. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 252.

Now well, this was the same Janak who was so charmed by Lord Ram and Laxman when he first met them at the time of welcoming sage Vishwamitra that he minced no words in praising them and accepting that his mind and heart are overwhelmed with a surge of affection for the two princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216, and once again in Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precedes Doha no. 217.

But when Vishwamitra introduced the two brothers to him as princes of the kingdom of Ayodhya and sons of Dasrath (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 216), Janak suddenly developed cold feet and was on the horns of a dilemma. Should he or should he not ask them to participate in the bow breaking event? As the event eventually unfolded we learn that he decided against it and kept mum on this issue, though he had invited the sage to the venue of the ceremony.

The next question is—‘if this is the case, then why did he not object to Lord Ram finally going up to break the bow?’ The clear-cut answer is that sage Vishwamitra had intervened and he was the one who had instructed Lord Ram to go and break the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 254. Obviously king Janak did not object because he did not wish to oppose a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra as this would not only be a highly irreverent thing to do that would unnecessarily burden him with unwarranted punishment that accompanies committing of a great sin of insulting a sage who is his guest-of-honour at that moment, but also there was the fear of inviting the sage’s wrath. This obviously was another reason why Janak calmly bore with Laxman’s insinuations and angry outburst directed straight at Janak as described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Doha no. 253. Janak knew that both the brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, had the loving patronage of sage Vishwamitra, and it would be wise for him to keep quiet because Laxman must surely have had a silent nod from the sage to speak so angrily in public, for otherwise it is unimaginable to think that he could behave in such an insulting and angry manner if the sage did not give his consent.

(b) The other reason of Janak not inviting Dasrath to the bow-breaking event is this—Janak observed the strict rule of having one wife to whom he was loyal throughout his life, his queen Sunayana. In fact, even his younger brother Kushdwaj had only one wife. But on the other hand, Dasrath was lustful and had gone wayward because he had married more than once—he had three well-known wives, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Not only this, whereas Janak was a highly spiritual man with a high level of metaphysical knowledge and detachment from materialistic world, one who used to hold conclaves of great scholars on a regular basis where great metaphysical and theological debates took place and had the renowned scholar-sage Yagyawalkya as one of his moral preceptors with whom he used to have thorough discussions on spiritual matters (refer: Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Cantos 3-4), king Dasrath is depicted as a lustful man who had fallen so low in terms of self-restraint of his passions that he had become a virtual servant of one of his wives, Kaikeyi, so much so that he had been forced by her to send Lord Ram to 14 years of forest exile. Instead of standing up like a bold, brave and courageous king who could defeat the mightiest of enemies in battle, Dasrath succumbed to her, fell at her feet and wept like a child before her, pleading with her to spare his life and excuse Lord Ram from going to the forest! This episode is narrated in graphic detail in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 40.

Though this incident occurs after the marriage, but the ill-reputation of Dasrath as being a lustful and passionate man who preferred the company of women had spread far and wide. Then say, given this, how would Janak wish that his daughter should marry either such a king who already has three wives, or even in his discredited family?

(c) The third reason that is usually cited by scholars is that Dasrath was a ‘Chakravarti king’, i.e. an Emperor whose realm stretched to far-off places on earth that covered a wide circle (‘Chakra’ = a circle). Since king Janak, meanwhile, was merely a ‘king’ and not an Emperor of the stature of Dasrath, so he feared that if he sent an invitation it would be turned down, and that would be insulting and humiliating for Janak as well as for his kingdom. But this argument does not hold water because it is clearly

said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 320 that the gods who never speak a lie declared that both the kings were of equal stature and majesty.]

मुदित राउ कहि भलेहिं कृपाला । पठए दूत बोलि तेहि काला ॥ २ ॥

mudita rā'u kahi bhalēhiṁ kṛpālā. paṭha'ē dūta bōli tēhi kālā. 2.

The king (Janak) was delighted, and he responded—‘Very well, oh merciful Lord! It will be done.’

The king summoned his messengers immediately and sent them to Ayodhya (with the message as well as the invitation). (2)

[Note—King Janak was delighted because sage Vishwamitra had given him an advice that was most appropriate and welcomed by him. He had wanted to send the invitation to Dasrath nevertheless, but now with the stamp of approval from sage Vishwamitra he was exhilarated that whatever doubts that he had in his mind as to whether Dasrath would like to accept the invitation or not were now dispelled. As the father of Sita he would certainly have liked to welcome and make sure that the father of the groom, Lord Ram, attended the marriage ceremony, especially when the groom’s family had an equal stature as that of the bride’s. On the other hand, it would have been a matter of scandalous gossip if the groom’s family had abstained from the marriage for whatever reason.

Janak was a wise king. Marriages were, and are still, used in traditional societies as great bonding factors, uniting two great families and forging ties that stand in good stead for both the families. If for some reason the marriage was solemnized without the presence of Dasrath then it would have created a situation of bitterness between two mighty kingdoms that no amount of sweetener would ever let its affects be overcome later on.

The king wasted no time in sending the messenger. This messenger had two briefs: One was an ‘invitation’ from king Janak for king Dasrath, requesting the latter to come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony of his son, Lord Ram, with Sita, the daughter of Janak. The other was a ‘message’ from sage Vishwamitra to the same effect.

The wise sage wished to tell Dasrath that his two sons were hale and hearty, that they had given their father and his family great glory and honour, and that the sage has fulfilled his moral obligations towards Dasrath by ensuring that his two sons, whom he had entrusted into the care of the sage, had achieved rare distinction in the world and gained the sort of fame that they would not have attained if they had remained at Ayodhya.]

बहुरि महाजन सकल बोलाए । आइ सबन्हि सादर सिर नाए ॥ ३ ॥

हाट बाट मंदिर सुरबासा । नगरु सँवारहु चारिहुँ पासा ॥ ४ ॥

bahuri mahājana sakala bōlā'ē. ā'i sabanhi sādara sira nā'ē. 3.

hāṭa bāṭa mandira surabāsā. nagaru samvārahu cārihum' pāsā. 4.

The king then summoned leading citizens (of Janakpur), all of whom came immediately and bowed their heads before him. [‘Bowing the head’ had two purposes: one obviously

was to show their respect to their king, and the other was to say that they are ready to follow his instructions.] (3)

The king instructed them, ‘Decorate the city from all sides—be it the market places, the streets, the homes or the temples.’ (4)

[Note—The city was already decorated as it had been spruced up for the bow-breaking ceremony where thousands of kings from far away lands were invited. No one would want his home dirty and unkempt when he has invited guests. So it was natural that all arrangements had been made to give a positive impression of the kingdom to the invited kings. Besides these special arrangements, the city of Janakpur was well-planned and had been bestowed with natural beauty. There is ample evidence of it in its description in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 214.

In this context the present instruction of the king means that if there were any shortcomings then they must be looked into and fixed, and fineness must be added to the décor. Now that the marriage has been finalized, and fortunately the groom’s family is one of the most reputed and well-known families on earth, then an appropriate welcome should be granted to it by erecting gates and arches for instances, and all resources must be used to make the guests as comfortable and happy as possible.

Whereas earlier the exterior of the city was decorated, now preparations must be made to decorate it more closely, with each individual home and temple given special attention to give the whole city a pristine look of glamour and magnificence from one end to the other that will make it appear like a decked-up bride from foot to head, so to say.

For instance, fresh flowers and plants should replace the stale ones put many days ago; the streets should be washed clean with scented water; the homes and public buildings should be adorned with festoons and hangings; the temples decorated wonderfully; the public parks and market places should bear a festive atmosphere as well as one of opulence and prosperity.

That is why the wise king had invited “all leading citizens of the city” instead of only state employees and professionals such as decorators, carpenters, plumbers, smiths, florists, craftsmen and engineers etc. He wanted each individual citizen of the city to feel that he is a part of the celebrations, to make them participate in a team spirit, to feel that it was his responsibility to contribute his might in the whole effort because it was a common celebration for all citizens, big and small. Thus, each man went home and started decorating his own home, leaving the royal employees free to take care of public places such as markets, streets, squares, parks and temples.

This observation will be very clear in the following verse nos. 5-7 herein below. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 289 below. There we shall read that “each household and building of the city was so decorated that they had the same beauty and splendour, the same glamour and grandeur as the palace of king Janak”.]

हरषि चले निज निज गृह आए । पुनि परिचारक बोलि पठाए ॥ ५ ॥

रचहु बिचित्र बितान बनाई । सिर धरि बचन चले सचु पाई ॥ ६ ॥

haraṣi calē nija nija gr̥ha ā'ē. puni paricāraka bōli paṭhā'ē. 5.
racahu bicitra bitāna banā'ī. sira dhari bacana calē sacū pā'ī. 6.

The leading citizens (such as chiefs of families, businesses, traders, noblemen, grandees, knights and councillors) were very happy and glad to hear this instruction, and all of them cheerfully went away from there and arrived at their homes (to carry out the wishes of the king).

The king then summoned his royal attendants and senior members of his royal staff. (5)

He instructed them—‘Erect a wonderful pavilion which should be uniquely decorated.’ [Though not specifically mentioned, the pavilion probably would be the one where the marriage ritual was to be performed. It may also mean that the king ordered his craftsmen to erect a number of beautiful pavilions around the city at many important places to act as shelters or resting place for guests who would like to visit the city for the purpose of sight-seeing could relax and take rest.]

All of them (i.e. the royal employees and personal staff of the king) gladly accepted the king’s words, literally keeping the king’s instructions on their heads as a gesture of obeying them without any question or doubt, and they cheerfully proceeded forthwith to accomplish the task assigned to them. (6)

[Note—Refer also to note appended to verse nos. 3-4 herein above.

So we see that the king summoned the senior citizens as well as his personal staff members who were also state employees. The first group was to take care of the decorations at the micro level, and the second group was to take care of the preparations at the macro level. Whereas the citizens were asked to decorate their own homes and neighbours, the royal employees were instructed to start working on public projects by making suitable arrangements and inviting expert craftsmen. The wise king knew very well how to organize things on a massive scale while ensuring the willing participation of all involved.

A good servant is one who cheerfully obeys his master’s commands—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 301. This is exemplified here in both the cases of the citizens as well as the state employees because all of them were glad when they heard the instructions of their king to go and decorate the city glamorously.]

पठए बोलि गुनी तिन्ह नाना । जे बितान बिधि कुसल सुजाना ॥ ७ ॥

बिधिहि बंदि तिन्ह कीन्ह अरंभा । बिरचे कनक कदलि के खंभा ॥ ८ ॥

paṭha'ē bōli gunī tinha nānā. jē bitāna bidhi kusala sujānā. 7.

bidhihi bandi tinha kīnha arambhā. biracē kanaka kadali kē khambhā. 8.

Now, the royal staff members summoned many skilled artisans and craftsmen who were experts in erecting beautiful pavilions and canopies of different forms and sorts, with varying sizes and designs. (7)

All of them first sought the blessings of the Creator (“bidhihi bandi”) (so that the work is accomplished perfectly without a hitch), and then got on with their assigned jobs in right earnest. The pillars and supports they made for the pavilions and canopies were of gold and designed like plantain trees. (8)

[Note—These artisans were experts in their respective fields. Some would build the pillars, some the gates, some the arches, some the platforms and seats, some would

design the canopy and the parasol, some would take care of the central part where the sacred fire would be lit, and there was an army of such skilled craftsmen who would take care of many other finer details of the different features of the pavilion that was to be erected.

So we see that there was a clearly marked hierarchical set up in the kingdom. The king ordered the senior members of his royal staff, and they passed on the instructions to the artisans, the workers and the labourers.]

दो०. हरित मनिन्ह के पत्र फल पदुमराग के फूल ।
रचना देखि बिचित्र अति मनु बिरंचि कर भूल ॥ २८७ ॥

dōhā.

harita maninha kē patra phala padumarāga kē phūla.
racanā dēkhi bicitra ati manu birañci kara bhūla. 287.

Green gems (i.e. the emerald) was used to craft leaves and fruits out of them, and the red gem (i.e. the ruby) was used to shape blooming flowers from them. [That is, these gems were carefully chiseled and given the shape of leaves, fruits and flowers that would be used to decorate the various parts of the pavilion, such as its pillars which were designed like the stem of the plantain tree.]

The craftsmanship was so wonderful and the creation was so fabulous that even the Creator (who has created such a beautiful world with so much diversity and wonderful sights) was awed when he saw them. His mind was bewildered at this magical sight which he couldn't imagine to be true, and thus he thought that his mind was making a mistake by wrongly interpreting the sight. [That is, the pavilion was so magically beautiful that the Creator himself was deluded. He thought that he was seeing a mirage because his mind could not imagine or visualize of such a wonderful creation.] (Doha no. 287)

[Note—The Creator had been very proud of his craftsmanship. He had hitherto thought that no one can ever create anything more wondrous than what he had created in the form of this majestic world. The design of this pavilion was beyond his conception or imagination. He had never dreamt of anything of such a magnificent beauty. So he was stunned at its sight. He rubbed his eyes in amazement and thought that he was hallucinating because the pavilion was beautiful beyond his imagination.]

चौ०. बेनु हरित मनिमय सब कीन्हे । सरल सपरब परहिं नहिं चीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bēnu harita manimaya saba kīnhē. sarala saparaba parahim nahim cīnhē. 1.

Emerald, the green gem, was used to craft all the bamboo sticks out of them, complete with its straight part and its knots. These artificial bamboo sticks made of emerald were

so natural in their appearance that it was impossible to distinguish them from the real ones. (1)

[Note—The roof of the marriage pavilion is traditionally made of green and fresh bamboos. For this particular pavilion however, emeralds were used, but the craftsmanship was so fine that it was impossible to say whether the finished product was made of gems or real bamboo stems.]

कनक कलित अहिबेलि बनाई । लखि नहिं परइ सपरन सुहाई ॥ २ ॥

kanaka kalita ahibēli banā'ī. lakhi nahin para'i saparana suhā'ī. 2.

Creepers of the Piper-betel (that were twined around the pillars and the thin rafters) were made from gold, complete with their leaves, and fashioned so expertly and perfect in shape and design that they did not appear to be artificial (i.e. they appeared to be natural creepers of a golden colour). (2)

[Note—The Piper-betel is regarded as very auspicious in Indian households, and the leaf of this creeper is used in all religious occasions when offerings are made to different gods and goddesses. The leaves are also used as mouth freshners, and chewed along with fillings of areca-nut slivers or scrappings, condiments such as cardamom and clove, and garnished with a dash of thin paste consisting of calcium and catechu.

The pavilion's pillars and other straight components were decorated with long threads of gold which were designed like creepers of the Piper-betel. The leaves of this creeper were also made from gold plates.]

तेहि के रचि पचि बंध बनाए । बिच बिच मुकुता दाम सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥

tēhi kē raci paci bandha banā'ē. bica bica mukutā dāma suhā'ē. 3.

These creepers were intricately intertwined to make fine ropes (or cords which were used as strings to tie together and hold in position the various components of the pavilion). Here and there, precious pearls were either tucked (inserted) in these ropes (to look like dew or rain drops), or hung in clusters or as strings from them (resembling either garlands or pendants made of gold). (3)

[Note—The pearls added beauty to the golden creepers and made a wonderful contrast because the gold is yellow in colour while the pearl is white. Individual pieces of the pearl that were tucked here and there on the golden creepers gave the impression of dew or water drops clinging to these creepers. The strings of pearls were also used as garlands hung from the pillars and rafters. Some of the pearls that were hung in the form of a free-hanging string gave the impression of a decorative hanging or a pendant which swayed in breeze.]

मानिक मरकत कुलिस पिरोजा । चीरि कोरि पचि रचे सरोजा ॥ ४ ॥

mānika marakata kulisa pirōjā. cīri kōri paci racē sarōjā. 4.

Gems such as rubies, emeralds, diamonds and turquoises were cut, scooped, carved and inlaid to fashion beautiful lotus flowers with open petals from them. (4)

[Note—Large pieces of these gems were used to make lotus flowers. All religious ceremonies are deemed to be incomplete without this flower. Like the betel leaves, the lotus flowers too are necessary in all religious ceremonies.]

किए भृंग बहुरंग बिहंगा । गुंजहिं कूजहिं पवन प्रसंगा ॥ ५ ॥

ki'e bhr̥ṅga bahuraṅga bihaṅgā. guṅjahim kūjahim pavana prasaṅgā. 5.

[To complete the ambience created by the bamboo stalks, the lotus flowers and the creepers, it was necessary to make the following additions—] Black-bees and various kinds of birds of colourful feathers were also made. They buzzed and whistled when they were rustled by the breeze blowing past them. (5)

[Note—The 'black-bee' is associated with the lotus flower because this insect hovers around the flower in search of nectar as soon as it opens. The birds chirp and hop around trees and creepers, in search of fruits and insects to feed themselves. Without these creatures the picture would have been incomplete.

Though it is not mentioned here what gem or precious stone was used to craft the bee or the bird, but one can fairly easily guess that every precious thing that was used to make pillars, rafters, sticks, flowers, fruits and creepers was also used to fashion birds and bees out of it.]

सुर प्रतिमा खंभन गढ़ि काढ़ी । मंगल द्रव्य लिएँ सब ठाढ़ी ॥ ६ ॥

sura pratimā khambhana gaḍhi kār̥hīm. maṅgala drabya li'eṁ saba ṭhār̥hīm. 6.

Images of gods were sculpted on the pillars. These images depicted all the gods in a standing posture with auspicious things in their hands. (6)

[Note—What were the 'auspicious things' these images held in their hands? An indicative list of things that are regarded as 'auspicious and providers of good omen' is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 346. They are the following—turmeric, blades of Durba grass, curd, ordinary leaves (especially mango leaves), flowers of different kinds, betel leaves, areca-nuts, auspicious edible roots, unthrashed rice, sprouts of barley, gorochan (a yellow pigment), puffed paddy, and buds of the basil plant.

In other words, these images of gods had many such things in their hands to mark auspiciousness of the occasion.

It is to be noted that the images depicted the gods in a 'standing posture' as a sign of showing respect to Lord Ram who was an incarnate Supreme Being, and all other guests who had come to attend the divine union of the Lord with his Shakti known as Sita.]

चौकें भाँति अनेक पुराई । सिंधुर मनिमय सहज सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

caukēm bhām̐ti anēka purā'īm. sindhura manimaya sahaja suhā'īm. 7.

Decorative squares and geometric designs based on religious themes (i.e. patterned on various ‘Yantras’ or geometrical designs as prescribed for different rituals) were drawn on the ground (which were either painted on the floor, or made by making lines on the ground by pouring a thin layer of powder of different colours or even flours of different cereals and pulses that were mixed with various colours).

They were beautifully designed and decorated with ‘elephant pearls (sindhura mani)¹’. (7)

[Note—A special class of wild elephants are said to exude a white sap from the skin of their heads. It is very rare, and when solidified each drop of this sap appears in the shape of natural pearl. It is known as ‘Gaja-Mukta’, or “the pearl of the elephant; pearl produced by the elephant”.

The ‘squares’ and other geometrical patterns were designed like worship ‘Yantras’ that are ancient worship instruments used in occult forms of religious practices to invoke the divine powers of gods and goddesses who stand for the cosmic energy that is sought to be harnessed.]

दो०. सौरभ पल्लव सुभग सुठि किए नीलमनि कोरि ।
हेम बौर मरकत घवरि लसत पाटमय डोरि ॥ २८८ ॥

dōhā.

saurabha pallava subhaga suṭhi ki'ē nīlamani kōri.
hēma baura marakata ghavari lasata pāṭamaya ḍōri. 288.

Leaves of the mango plant were made by cutting the edges of sapphire and engraving the design of leaves on them, while its small flowers were made from gold, and bunches of its fruits (the mango) were crafted from emerald. These fruits were made to hang with the help of short strings made of silk. (Doha no. 288)

[Note—“Saurabha” = mango. “Neelmani” = the blue gem; the sapphire. “Hema” = gold. “Markat” = emerald. “Dhavari” = cluster of flowers. “Paat” = silk; “Paatmaya” = silken.

This Doha describes the way the mango fruits, leaves and flowers were designed. These were added to the other items that were used to decorate the pavilion.]

चौ०. रचे रुचिर बर बंदनिवारे । मनहुँ मनोभवँ फंद सँवारे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

racē rucira bara bandanivārē. manahum̐ manōbhavam̐ phanda sam̐vārē. 1.

The artisans made fascinating festoons that were hung on all entrance and exit points such as the doorways, the gateways and the archways. These hangings were so charming and intricately woven that they appeared to be like snares put up by Kamdeo (cupid) (to

captivate the mind and the heart of all the guests who would attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita). (1)

[Note—In the foregoing verses, from Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 288, we have read about the special features of the pavilion where the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita was to be solemnised with respect to its design and the materials used to make it. Now in these verses we shall read about the external features of this pavilion. The present verse no. 1 deals with the entrance and exit points of the huge pavilion itself as well as the arena in general.

Remember: It was the venue of the marriage of a ‘princess’, and therefore the construction was done on a grand and extensive scale. The venue had many entrance and exit points, and each was extensively decorated. The metaphor of the Kamdeo is commonly cited in Indian scriptures and other literature to stress on the beauty and charm of the object referred to. Kamdeo is the god of beauty and physical charm, and hence wherever and whenever he is invoked, the intent is to show that the thing in question has remarkable beauty and charm.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 346 that also invokes Kamdeo with respect to the auspicious pitchers filled with scented liquid as if Kamdeo had squeezed the virtue of auspiciousness to extract its essence and then filled these pitchers with it.

The entrance points of the venue had to be especially attractive because they were like the face of the main venue. They would hint to the guest what was to be expected inside. These gateways, archways and doorways had to be so wonderful that the guest would feel warmly welcomed even before he entered the main venue.

It is just like the case of a ‘beautiful and attractive face’ of the body; when one meets someone it is the face which he sees and appreciates first before anything else. If the face is ugly and gloomy, the rest of the interaction becomes unattractive and lacking in charm. The beautiful interior is often marred by an ugly or unsuitable exterior. For instance, we remember a person with a lovely face more favourably than a person with an ugly face. The same thing applies here: all efforts were made to deck-up the exterior of the pavilion as well as the arena in general so that the immense efforts invested in the construction of the magnificent pavilion itself do not go to waste, so that the visitor carries with him a permanently sweet memory of what he has seen and witnessed.]

मंगल कलस अनेक बनाए । ध्वज पताक पट चमर सुहाए ॥ २ ॥

maṅgala kalasa anēka banā'ē. dhvaja patāka paṭa camara suhā'ē. 2.

Many auspicious vessels (“Kalas”) were crafted and put up¹. Similarly, beautiful flags, banners, curtains and whisks were also made and hung up at appropriate places (for the purpose of decoration and to give the whole arena an image of a huge grand palace). (2)

[Note—¹The “Kalases” are pitchers and other vessels that are ordinarily made of clay, but those who can afford them they can also be made from precious metals such as gold and silver, or of lesser valuable materials such as copper, brass etc. On auspicious occasions they are placed at strategic points such as all entrances and exits of a place where a religious ceremony is to be held. They are painted colourfully and decorated with leaves, fruits etc.

The previous verse no. 1 deals with the entrance points, and so now this present verse no. 2 elaborates on it to tell us more about how these entrances were decorated: there were auspicious pitchers placed on either side of the entrances which were wonderful

decorated with flags, banners, curtains and whisks that were put up on them to give them the appearance of the gates and doors of a royal palace.

Besides being placed at the entrance and exit points, these auspicious vessels are placed on the ceremonial 'squares' that are painted or made from coloured powder on the ground as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 288 above.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296 which tell us how the citizens of Ayodhya decorated their households when the good news of Lord Ram's marriage reached the city. Here also we shall read that the decoration made by them had all the components mentioned in the present verse: there were flags, banners, curtains, whisks, golden pitchers, festoons and nets made from gems and precious stones of many kinds. Then there were garlands and hangings made from blades of fresh green grass.

दीप मनोहर मनिमय नाना । जाइ न बरनि बिचित्र बिताना ॥ ३ ॥

dīpa manōhara manimaya nānā. jā'i na barani bicitra bitānā. 3.

Many kinds of oil-lamps made from gems of different varieties were so beautiful to look at that they virtually stole the mind and the heart of the onlooker (i.e. these lamps held the attention of the viewer so much so that he was captivated by their fabulous beauty).

In this way, the extensive pavilion was erected in such a magnificent way that it looked most wonderful and awe-inspiring, and it defied description. (3)

[Note—The lighted lamps are placed at different locations of such a pavilion. Some are placed on leaves that cover the mouth of the ceremonial vessels like the ones described in the previous verse no. 2, some are placed at the sides of the gate itself, others along the walls and steps leading upto the platform, and still others at nooks and corners of the pavilion to give the whole place a glittering and romantic look.

The lighted lamps are also used for formal worship rituals, and are placed on and around the altar, at the foot of the image of the deity to be worshipped, and etc.]

जेहिं मंडप दुलहिनि बैदेही । सो बरनै असि मति कबि केही ॥ ४ ॥

jēhim maṇḍapa dulaḥini baidēhī. sō baranai asi mati kabi kēhī. 4.

Say, which poet has the expertise and acumen, literary as well as poetic, sufficient enough to describe the grandeur, opulence and elegance of the pavilion in which "Vaidehi" (the daughter of king Videha, another name of king Janak) was to be present as a bride. (4)

[Note—This verse answers the question 'which pavilion was especially decorated by the expert artisans of Janakpur?' Does it mean that no other pavilions were erected? No; certainly many other pavilions were erected all over the city, such as along main city thoroughfares and around public parks and squares for the purpose of giving a place to rest for the visitors and guests who would like to roam around the city. But the focus of attention was the pavilion where the marriage was to be held.

The use of the word "Vaidehi" for Sita is very significant here. It is used to remove any misgivings about who Sita actually was, because marriages are worldly events that unite one mortal human being to another mortal human being. One must not be misled by

this story of Sita marrying Lord Ram to get an impression that an ordinary princess is being married to a prince. Because if this misconception creeps in then the very purpose of narrating this event would lose its element of divinity and holiness, and it would be reduced to the narration of the marriage of king's daughter by one of the royal bards! It is not to be allowed to be so.

Remember: Both Sita and Lord Ram are not ordinary human beings who have a gross body that will become old and die one day. They are not ordinary human princess and prince who are marrying each other. These two are divine Beings—Sita being goddess Laxmi and Sri Ram being Lord Vishnu—who have willingly assumed the form of human beings for some great work of the gods that was pending to be done. In other words, they are the 'disembodied supreme Self', an image that has no physical aspect other than a mere reflective form of the original—as clearly meant by the word "Vaidehi" which means 'one without a physical gross body'.]

दूलहु रामु रूप गुन सागर । सो बितानु तिहुँ लोक उजागर ॥ ५ ॥

dūlahu rāmu rūpa guna sāgara. sō bitānu tihum' lōka ujāgara. 5.

The canopy under which Lord Ram—who is an ocean¹ of all Gunas (auspicious virtues) and Roop (beauty)²—will appear as a groom, is definitely the one that shines³ (occupies a privileged and special place) in the entire world consisting of three dimensions⁴. (5)

[Note—¹The word "ocean" is a figure of speech to mean that the Lord's goodness and his virtues are countless and immeasurable just like the vastness of the ocean.

²Good and auspicious virtues give glory and fame to the one who possesses them. They are a person's adornment just like the beautiful clothes and ornaments he wears. The good qualities and exemplary characters that a person possesses give his personality an intrinsic beauty and enduring charm that are more meaningful than merely possessing artificial good-looking paraphernalia that are pleasant for the eyes but hollow from the inside as well as transient.

So, here it is meant that Lord Ram's beauty ("Roop") is not merely limited to his lovely physical appearances but goes deep down to mean the inherent good nature and excellent qualities that he possesses. His beauty is not skin-deep, but it is as 'deep as the ocean', because it is represented by the wonderful qualities and characters that the Lord possesses in a natural way.

³This canopy is distinct from all other such canopies. It has a unique place or distinction of its own; it stands out; it occupies a place of pride; it has an outstanding glory of its own.

Now, the use of the word "canopy" and then describing it as being "unique" is very significant here. It subtly refers the cosmic form of Lord Ram because he indeed is the Supreme Being in a manifested form. From the cosmic perspective of this world, the 'sky' is the canopy! So, when the Lord of the world stands below a canopy it implies that it symbolises the 'sky' that covers the whole world.

In this context one must refer to the previous verse no. 4 where Sita is addressed as "Vaidehi". The two verses, nos. 4 and 5, together intend to convey the message that the reader must not treat this marriage as between two human beings, but as a divine event that would bring together two unique cosmic forces of Nature—one is 'Brahm', the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram, and the other is 'Shakti', the cosmic forces of Nature.

⁴The three worlds referred to here are the heaven, the earth and the nether world. It may also mean the past world, the present world and the future world.

In other words, the canopy under which Lord Ram would stand as a groom was so magnificent that its like had never been erected before, would never be erected in future, and has never been erected in the present time also.]

जनक भवन कै सोभा जैसी । गृह गृह प्रति पुर देखिअ तैसी ॥ ६ ॥

janaka bhavana kai sōbhā jaisī. gr̥ha gr̥ha prati pura dēkhi'a taisī. 6.

The beauty and splendour that was seen at the royal palace of Janak was also replicated in all the homes of the city. [In other words, each individual household of the city was decorated in the best possible way as each householder regarded himself as a part of the grand celebration of Sita's marriage. Hence, each household and building of the city was so decorated that they had the same beauty and splendour, the same glamour and grandeur as the palace of king Janak.] (6)

[Note—Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 287, we have already read that Janak had called the senior citizens and requested them to decorate their individual homes and neighbourhoods. This present verse is an extension of it.

So, while the army of royal artisans and craftsmen engaged themselves to erect the marriage pavilion and other public pavilions, the citizens got down to the task of cleaning and beautifying their individual homes as well as their neighbourhoods.

It was a sort of community effort, and the result was that the entire city looked spick and span, glittering in every corner and appearing like heaven on earth.]

जेहिं तेरहुति तेहि समय निहारी । तेहि लघु लगहिं भुवन दस चारी ॥ ७ ॥

jēhiṁ tērahuti tēhi samaya nihārī. tēhi laghu lagahiṁ bhuvana dasa cārī. 7.

Anyone who happened to look at 'Tirhooti' (the city of Janakpur) at that time found it so magnificent and glamorous that all the fourteen Bhuvans (i.e. the 14 mythological worlds; or the fourteen levels of the existing world)¹ appeared to fade away in glory and look humble when compared to it (Janakpur). (7)

[Note—Refer to a note appended to Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261 above which lists the names of the fourteen Bhuvans referred to here.

A pertinent question arises here: who has seen these 'fourteen Bhuvans' that he would be able to compare them with Janakpur and find that the latter is more beautiful than any or all of them? Of course it is not possible for humans to do so. Then who were they who did the comparison?

The answer is this: Lord Ram's marriage was witnessed by all the gods, including the chief amongst the gods, such as Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, and Indra who is the king of gods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 herein below; as well as (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 314.]

जो संपदा नीच गृह सोहा । सो बिलोकि सुरनायक मोहा ॥ ८ ॥

jō sampadā nīca gr̥ha sōhā. sō bilōki suranāyaka mōhā. 8.

The prosperity and wealth that even the humblest of householder possessed in the city of Janakpur amazed the king of gods (Indra). [That is, Indra had not expected that such uniform distribution of prosperity and wealth would be witnessed on earth. He was also astonished at the immensity of wealth in Janakpur as it surpassed even the wealth of his heavenly kingdom.] (8)

[Note—How this unique achievement was made possible is explained by Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 314 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it by advising the stunned gods, including the creator Brahma who was dazed at the fabulous beauty he saw in Janakpur and began to doubt whether the city was his creation, by telling them to realise that—“It is the place where the supreme Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram is present along with his divine consort Laxmi in the form of Sita, so how can it lack anything? The Lord is the one who grants all wishes by merely taking his holy name, whose name is an eternal treasury of auspiciousness and well-being, and it can bestow the four legendary fruits obtained by doing meritorious deeds to the person who repeats this holy name.” The four fruits are ‘Artha’ = wealth and prosperity; ‘Kaam’ = fulfilment of desires; ‘Dharma’ = honour as an upholder of laws and doer of duties in an ethical manner; and ‘Moksha’ = spiritual liberation and deliverance.

Goddess Laxmi is the patron goddess of material wealth. This being the case, there is no wonder that there was extensive opulence and prosperity in Janakpur because Laxmi is present here in the form of Sita. Refer: Doha no. 289 herein below.

The beauty of the city of Janakpur has been described earlier also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214.]

दो०. बसइ नगर जेहिं लच्छि करि कपट नारि बर बेषु।
तेहि पुर कै सोभा कहत सकुचहिं सारद सेषु ॥ २८९ ॥

dōhā.

basa'i nagara jēhiṁ lacchi kari kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣu.
tēhi pura kai sōbhā kahata sakucahiṁ sārada sēṣu. 289.

The magnificence, the grandeur, the opulence and the splendour of a city where goddess Laxmi (the patron goddess of material wealth and prosperity; the divine consort of Lord Vishnu) herself lived in an illusionary form as a woman (i.e. as Sita, the daughter of Janak) was so great that even Sharda (goddess Saraswati who is the patron goddess of speech and learning) and the Sesha (the thousand-tongued celestial serpent) failed to describe it, they were reluctant to attempt to describe it (because they knew they won't be able to do it). (Doha no. 289)

[Note—As noted above in the note appended to previous verses, this Doha explains why the city looked so wonderful that there was no comparison between it and the rest of the world.]

चौ०. पहुँचे दूत राम पुर पावन । हरषे नगर बिलोकि सुहावन ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

pahumcē dūta rāma pura pāvana. haraṣē nagara bilōki suhāvana. 1.

The messengers¹ (of king Janak) reached the auspicious (“pāvana”; holy and sacred) city of Lord Ram (i.e. Ayodhya). They were thrilled to behold the beautiful and pleasant city².
(1)

[Note—¹Refer also to (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/102;

²and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296 also.

Now we pick up the narration that was paused in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287 herein above. Janak had sent his messengers to Ayodhya on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra. Both the cities of Janakpur as well as Ayodhya were wonderful to look at. We have already read about the pleasantness of the city of Janakpur and its suburbs in Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 214. Though not specifically mentioned here but we can comfortably assume that the city of Ayodhya as well as its suburbs were equally pleasant and wonderful to look at. This present verse no. 1 hints at it.

One important point is to be noted here. Ayodhya has been called “Rampur”, the ‘city of Ram’. This is done purposely to sum-up its glory—i.e. it is a city where the supreme Lord Vishnu has decided to come down to earth and live in the human form as Lord Ram. This being the case, there is no need for further elaboration on the city’s grandeur and beauty. Any intelligent person can arrive at a logical conclusion of the city’s magnificence based on common-sense when he reads about the beauty and grandeur of Janakpur where the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, i.e. goddess Laxmi, lives in the form of Sita. If the city of Sita (Janakpur) is grand, then obviously and naturally the city of her divine spouse, Lord Vishnu as Sri Ram, must at least be equal to the former if not more so.

Another important point to note is this: When the city was referred to as the “city of Lord Ram”, i.e. ‘Rampur’, in the first half of the verse, it was described as being ‘auspicious, holy and sacred’—i.e. as “Paawan”. But in the second half when it is merely referred to as a ‘city’ or “Nagar”, it is described as being pleasant and wonderful to look at. Well, the subtle idea is that a place where the Lord God lived was equivalent to a pilgrim place, a holy site. The arrival of the messengers here is equivalent to a person arriving at any holy site where one goes for pilgrimage. In other words, the messengers were very lucky to have gone on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Ayodhya.

Once inside the city, like any other normal pilgrim, they looked at its sights, its temples and other buildings, its parks, gardens, market places and streets as they were making their way to the palace of king Dasrath. Hence, this view of the city in general is being described in a normal way—as consisting of pleasant sights.

¹It ought to be noted here that ‘more than one person was sent as messenger’, though of course there was a chief amongst them. This fact is clearly mentioned in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 67, verse no. 27.

They were sent on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra as well as on the advice of Satanand, the royal priest of Janakpur—refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 68, verse no. 13.]

भूप द्वार तिन्ह खबरि जनाई । दसरथ नृप सुनि लिए बोलाई ॥ २ ॥

bhūpa dvāra tinha khabari janāī. dasaratha nṛpa suni li'ē bōlāī. 2.

When the messenger reached the gates of the palace of king Dasrath, he sent in a message for the king, who called him as soon as he heard of his arrival. (2)

[Note—King Dasrath was like an Emperor; many kings had to wait for their turn to meet him. There must have been a hierarchical setup in the palace as well as the royal court, and those senior to others were given quicker audience with the king. This is clear in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2 that says “the kings were anxious to be in the favour of Dasrath, and they performed their respective duties keeping in mind that Dasrath is pleased and approves of their actions”; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25 that says “the kings of this world sought the goodwill and lived at the pleasure of king Dasrath on the strength of whose arms even the king of gods (Indra) lived without any hindrance to his authority”.

These arriving messengers must have seen a number of important persons waiting at the gates for their turn to meet king Dasrath. So they informed the guards that they have come with a special message from sage Vishwamitra, and it concerns Lord Ram and Laxman. This message was to be delivered to the king immediately. This gave them a ‘green flag’ and a preferential treatment at the hands of the guards who rushed inside the royal palace to inform the king of their arrival.

So, as soon as the king heard the news that messengers have arrived with the news of the two princes, and they carry a message from sage Vishwamitra, he immediately ordered that they be ushered in.]

करि प्रनामु तिन्ह पाती दीन्ही । मुदित महीप आपु उठि लीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

kari pranāmu tinha pātī dīnhī. mudita mahīpa āpu uṭhi līnhī. 3.

The messengers bowed before the king and gave him the letter with due respect. The king was exhilarated and he himself got up and took it with his own hands. (3)

[Note—Usually any message or letter was given to the king through his attendants. But in this case, the king stood up himself to receive it. He was very anxious to learn about his two sons who had gone away with sage Vishwamitra for quite some time now. This was the first time any news about them has arrived. So naturally as a father the king was extremely eager to read it.

Another reason for Dasrath getting up himself to receive the letter was that it had a message from the revered sage Vishwamitra. Now do we see why king Janak had been reluctant to send messengers to Ayodhya before sage Vishwamitra specifically instructed him to do so? Janak was aware that kings have to wait for their turn to meet Dasrath, as the latter was an Emperor. So he feared that if he sent the messenger in an ordinary

routine way like a king's letter-bearer, then perhaps he will have to wait in a queue for getting a chance to present himself before king Dasrath. But if he bore a message from sage Vishwamitra, then he will get prompt response.

The king was exhilarated upon receiving the letter because it was the first time, after a long gap, that any news has come about his beloved two sons, Ram and Laxman, and that even through sage Vishwamitra. In this context, the following verses are very explicit: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 291; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 101.]

बारि बिलोचन बाँचत पाती । पुलक गात आई भरि छाती ॥ ४ ॥

bāri bilōcana bām̐cata pātī. pulaka gāta ā'ī bhari chātī. 4.

As he (Dasrath) read the letter, tears (of joy and affection) gushed out of his eyes. His body was filled with thrill, and so was his heart that was overwhelmed. (4)

[Note—Dasrath was so overwhelmed with emotions that his throat was virtually choked as tears flowed from his eyes, a current of thrill shot through his entire body, and his heart literally skipped a beat. He perhaps read some lines and stopped for a while to recover himself. This will be clear in verse nos. 5-6 herein below where it is said that: “He was virtually dumbfounded upon remembering Lord Ram and Laxman so much so that and could not read the letter long enough to learn any good or bad it contained. However, he regained his composure and once again read it with patience”, after having recovered from the emotional ecstasy that accompanied his initial euphoria.]

रामु लखनु उर कर बर चीठी । रहि गए कहत न खाटी मीठी ॥ ५ ॥

rāmu lakhanu ura kara bara cīṭhī. rahi ga'e kahata na khāṭī mīṭhī. 5.

With the image (memory) of Lord Ram and Laxman in his heart and the letter in his hand, the king stood dumbfounded so much so that he could not utter anything and say whether there was good news or bad one in it (i.e. in the letter). (5)

[Note—The king was an extremely busy person, and he had no time to brood about his two sons who had been away from him for quite some time now. So when he saw the letter, the pleasant and fond memories of Lord Ram and Laxman flooded his heart and mind and virtually drowned him in a surge of emotion. He choked; tears gushed out of his eyes; his body was thrilled. He stood like a statue for some time. He could not even tell anything to the royal court that had its ears standing erect to hear what that letter contained, so overwhelmed he was.

Those moments must have been certainly very anxious for all those attending the court at that time when they saw tears rushing out of the king's eyes. His ministers and other courtiers must have kept their fingers crossed, hoping for good news as they watched their king in a stunned state!

To underline the dramatic effect of the letter and to emphasise the uncertainty and anxiety of the moment, this verse says that the king “could not utter anything, whether it was good news or bad news”.]

पुनि धरि धीर पत्रिका बाँची । हरषी सभा बात सुनि साँची ॥ ६ ॥

puni dhari dhīra patrikā bām̐cī. haraṣī sabhā bāta suni sām̐cī. 6.

However, recollecting himself and regaining his composure, the king read the letter again patiently. [This time he read it fully and aloud so that everyone could hear its contents.]¹

The royal court was exhilarated and overjoyed upon hearing the correct news (and truthful information about the two princes, news that was trustworthy, news that conveyed Lord Ram's great achievement of breaking the formidable bow which not only established his name and glory in the whole world but also entitled him to marry Sita, the most beautiful girl of her time)². (6)

Note—¹As we have read in the foregoing verses, Dasrath could not read the letter initially as he was overwhelmed with surging waves of emotions. Soon however, he regained his composure and read the letter aloud. How do we know that he “read it aloud?” Well, this is evident because it is said that the “court heard it and everyone felt joyous”.

We shall soon see that Dasrath had read this letter “twice”—once it now, and then once again when Bharat asked him about its contents. Refer: Doha no. 290 herein below.

²It is to be noted that it is said in the second part of this verse that “everyone in the assembly was overjoyed to hear the ‘truthful’ news”. The emphasise is on “hearing of truthful news” (bāta suni sām̐cī). This is because the letter had come with the signature of sage Vishwamitra, and it therefore had true, ‘trustworthy and genuine’ news about Lord Ram and Laxman, that the invitation to come to Janakpur was genuine, and that there was no trap in it.

In ancient times, it was quite common to trap a king's army in an ambush by first inviting him to attend some sort of ceremony and then laying out a trap for him mid-way. Against this backdrop, the use of the word “true news” assumes significance as it implies that the court of king Dasrath was reassured that the news was ‘genuine’ and ‘trustworthy’, and not some kind of foul play to cheat the king.

In this context, refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 291 herein below.]

खेलत रहे तहाँ सुधि पाई । आए भरतु सहित हित भाई ॥ ७ ॥

पूछत अति सनेहँ सकुचाई । तात कहाँ तें पाती आई ॥ ८ ॥

khēlata rahē tahām̐ sudhi pā'ī. ā'ē bharatu sahita hita bhā'ī. 7.

pūchata ati sanēham̐ sakucā'ī. tāta kahām̐ tēm̐ pātī ā'ī. 8.

When this news reached the place where Bharat was playing with his friends and brother Shatrughan, he (Bharat) immediately came (to his father, king Dasrath) along with his playmates and brother. (7)

He (Bharat) hesitantly asked the king most affectionately—‘Dear father, please tell me from where has the letter come?’ (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/102, stanza no. 1 also.

Bharat's question clearly indicates that he had only heard that some good news has come, but wasn't aware of either its contents or from where it has come.

Bharat was “hesitant” because he was not sure if he was observing royal protocol by bursting excitedly into the royal court with his playmates and directly asking the king about the contents of the letter and from where it had come. It was alright that Bharat was the son of king Dasrath and therefore a prince, but still he was expected to observe the rules of protocol when in the court. He could not be as informal with his father in an open court that was a formal place bearing the authority of state as he was with him inside the royal palace which was his home. But Bharat was so excited that he could not wait for formal permission from the king to ask questions or speak with him.

Besides this, the king had not summoned Bharat in this case; Bharat had heard the news from someone and had come on his own accord. May be the letter had to do with official matters of the kingdom and if that is the case then Bharat had no right to ask such questions as he did.

Even if everything else is neglected, we read here that Bharat was accompanied by his “playmates” when he came to king Dasrath’s court. Now, a royal court is certainly not a play-ground or palace courtyard where the prince can collect his friends and playmates around him. Certain basic level of court decorum and royal dignity had to be maintained, and a crowd of excited children in a court is certainly not acceptable.

These are some of the plausible reasons why Bharat was “hesitant” in asking his father about the letter that the messengers had brought.

Bharat asked “affectionately” because the letter contained news about Lord Ram and Laxman whom not only Bharat but also his brother Shatrughan as well as all other friends loved very much. So all of them were excited to know more about their best friends and brothers, i.e. about Lord Ram and Laxman.]

दो०. कुसल प्रानप्रिय बंधु दोउ अहहिं कहहु केहिं देस ।
सुनि सनेह साने बचन बाची बहुरि नरेस ॥ २९० ॥

dōhā.

kusala prānapriya bandhu dō'u ahahim kahahu kēhim dēsa.
suni sanēha sānē bacana bācī bahuri narēsa. 290.

Bharat asked his father king Dasrath—‘Are my brothers, who are very dear to my heart, happy and doing well? Say, where are they at present, and in which country?’

When the Emperor (“narēsa”) heard these honestly affectionate words, he read aloud the letter once again (so that Bharat and the others could hear it once again for clarifications). (Doha no. 290)

[Note—The word “narēsa” here endorses the view that Dasrath was an Emperor as expressed earlier in our discussion of how easily the messengers of Janak had been ushered in to meet Dasrath whereas other kings had to wait in a queue.

Now, this was the third time the letter was read by Dasrath. On the first occasion he was so overwhelmed that he couldn’t read it fully, and on the other occasion he did read it fully but Bharat was not present—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 herein above respectively.

The king decided to read the letter fully once again because he realized that Bharat won’t be satisfied unless he hears the contents fully. Besides this, the king wanted to train his sons on the way such invitations should be written, because such occasions do not come frequently.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/102 also.]

चौ०. सुनि पाती पुलके दोउ भ्राता । अधिक सनेहु समात न गाता ॥ १ ॥
प्रीति पुनीत भरत कै देखी । सकल सभाँ सुखु लहेउ बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī pātī pulakē dō'u bhrātā. adhika sanēhu samāta na gātā. 1.
prīti punīta bharata kai dēkhī. sakala sabhām' sukhu lahē'u bisēṣī. 2.

Upon hearing the letter the two brothers were overjoyed, and were so excited with happiness that it seemed their bodies were unable to contain their emotions of happiness, thrill and excitement. (1)

Seeing the undiluted and sincere affection of Bharat (for Lord Ram and Laxman)¹, the whole court was extremely delighted². (2)

[Note—¹Bharat shared a special bond of love and affection with Lord Ram, and the Lord reciprocated it in full measure. Both the brothers acknowledged each other's love on every occasion in the epic story of Ram Charit Manas as we shall see below.

For instance, let us see the following verses of Ayodhya Kand:--

(i) In Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 of Ayodhya Kand, mother Kaushalya tells Bharat that "Ram is dearer to you than your own Pran (life), and likewise you are dearer to Ram than his own self".

(ii) In Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 of Ayodhya Kand, the holy rivers at Triveni (i.e. river Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) had together praised Bharat's devotion and love for Lord Ram in an unequivocal term by assuring him that no one is more dear to Lord Ram than Bharat is.

(iii) A little later, even sage Bharadwaj has declared in an un-ambiguous language that Bharat has a special place in the heart of Lord Ram and the Lord loves him more than anyone else—refer: Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 208—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.

(iv) Even the creator Brahma had acknowledged the bond of undiluted and robust love and affection that Lord Ram and Bharat shared with each other when he had advised the gods—who wanted to prevent Bharat from persuading Lord Ram to return to Ahodhya because then the demons won't be eliminated—to leave everything to Bharat and never attempt any dirty tricks with him, because while on the one hand Lord Ram will never defy Bharat's wishes, Bharat too will never do anything that goes against the wishes of the Lord. This observations are ratified in the following verses of Ayodhya Kand:—(a) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259; (b) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 266; (c) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266; (d) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 266; and (e) Doha no. 269 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

(v) In Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 289 of Ayodhya Kand, king Janak has affirmed that the mutual love that Lord Ram and Bharat shared for each other was so immense and honest that neither can one describe it nor it can be ever be subjected to doubts.

(vi) Not only this, the glory and purity of love as well as devotion that Bharat had were so immense and deep that even Lord Ram was unable to fathom them—this was stated by king Janak in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289.

(vii) When we read this magnificent story we find that Bharat has himself acknowledged Lord Ram's great love and affection for him when he tells the Lord at Chitrakoot that when they were young the Lord used to voluntarily lose a game so that Bharat could win it—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

(viii) Earlier in the story, when Bharat learnt that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had gone to the forest and his mother had been instrumental in this most unfortunate development because she wanted to make him (Bharat) the king of Ayodhya instead of Lord Ram, Bharat had not only rebuked and insulted his mother sternly, and refused to accept the crown at any cost, but had also considered himself as a great sinner because his beloved brother had to go to the forest due to him, and had told the full court that his best welfare lied in serving Lord Ram and in nothing else whatsoever—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(a) Doha no. 160; (b) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162; (c) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 169; and (d) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Doha no. 183.

²This idea that the assembly was delighted to observe that there was a strong bond of love and affection between Bharat and Lord Ram is reflected twice again in the story—(i) once when Bharat had declared his decision not to accept the crown of Ayodhya that rightfully belonged to Lord Ram, and therefore he would go to the forest to bring the Lord back (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 185), and (ii) the second time when Bharat had accepted Lord Ram's instructions to wait patiently till the time of the Lord's exile is over (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 307).

Even the gods as well as the sages and holy men approved of this mutual acceptance of each others will by the two brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 270.]

तब नृप दूत निकट बैठारे । मधुर मनोहर बचन उचारे ॥ ३ ॥

taba nr̥pa dūta nikaṭa baiṭhārē. madhura manōhara bacana ucārē. 3.

Then the king called the messengers and made them sit cordially near (i.e. close to) him¹. He then spoke to them with a pleasant voice, using sweet friendly words². (3)

[Note—¹The messengers were till now standing at a distance from the king's throne while he read the letter and when Bharat had come in to learn what the news was. Since the news was exceptionally good and welcome, the messengers now got a special treatment, were accorded a treatment reserved for dignitaries and special guests as they were called near the king and made to sit close to him so that he can talk with them privately and on a one-to-one basis.

When one is very pleased with someone he calls the latter close and talks with him pleasantly. When Hanuman had come back from Lanka with the good news that Sita has been found, Lord Ram too had sat him close to him and had talked with him

affectionately—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

Further on in the story we read that Lord Ram had summoned Angad, one of the chief commanders of Lord Ram's army consisting of monkeys and bears that had attacked Lanka, and made him sit close to him to ask Angad about the news he has brought of the city when he had been sent by the Lord as an emissary to try to make truce with Ravana, the demon king. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Earlier in the story we have already read that when Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the place where king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra at the time of the latter's arrival at Janakpur, the sage had made the two brothers sit close to him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215.

The idea is that when one wishes to show special treatment to someone, or when he wants to discuss something confidentially, the other person is invited to come and sit close.

²The king was pleased to hear the good news, and that is why he spoke very politely and pleasantly with the messengers. The situation hypothetically would have been radically different if the messengers had brought some bad news—then the king's tone would have been stern and scathing.

In the next verse we shall read that the king addresses them with the friendly term "Brother".]

भैया कहहु कुसल दोउ बारे । तुझ नीकें निज नयन निहारे ॥ ४ ॥
 स्यामल गौर धरें धनु भाथा । बय किसोर कौसिक मुनि साथ ॥ ५ ॥
 पहिचानहु तुझ कहहु सुभाऊ । प्रेम बिबस पुनि पुनि कह राऊ ॥ ६ ॥

bhaiyā kahahu kusala dō'u bārē. tumha nīkēm nija nayana nihārē. 4.
 syāmala gaura dharēm dhanu bhāthā. baya kisōra kausika muni sāthā. 5.
 pahicānahu tumha kahahu subhā'ū. prēma bibasa puni puni kaha rā'ū. 6.

The king said—'Brother(s)¹, tell me about the well-being of the two children. Have you seen them personally and close enough to know about their welfare*?

[*This half of the verse can be also read as follows—"You are so fortunate that you have been able to see them from close."] (4)

[The king then identifies the two brothers so that the messengers can understand about whom the king was talking.] They have a dark and fair complexion respectively, and hold a bow and arrow each. They are young in age, and are in the company of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). (5)

If you recognize them then please tell me about their nature and behaviour.'

The king was so overwhelmed with love and affection (for his two sons) that he repeatedly asked the messengers this question². [That is, the king asked them to tell him more about Lord Ram and Laxman. The king was not contented and felt that he still didn't have enough of the good news about his two sons, so he prodded the messengers to say more each time they stopped speaking.] (6)

[Note—¹It is to be noted that king Dasrath has addressed the messengers with an affectionate term "Brother". This fits in well with his calling them close and making them

sit near him like they were very close to him, or were well-known to him, or were his friends.

This also shows the good nature of king Dasrath—that in spite of him being an Emperor he had no ego in him and he did not feel ill-at-ease in giving others their due respect. After all, the messengers were employees of king Janak and not royal members of his family. But Dasrath gave them the same respect he would have given some royal guest.

²Now the question arises—why did Dasrath repeatedly ask about the welfare of the two brothers? The answer is that Lord Ram and Laxman had gone with sage Vishwamitra to fight ferocious demons, and this was a matter of grave concern for Dasrath. Though he could not defy sage Vishwamitra's request and the advice given by his own royal priest Vasistha, but internally he was very apprehensive while sending the two brothers away to the forest to face demons. This is abundantly clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Doha no. 208.

There was no news of the two brothers ever since they had gone away with sage Vishwamitra. This fact has been expressly mentioned in the next verse no. 7 that follows herein below, as well as in Tulsidas' another classic book known as "Geetawali" in its Baal Kand, verse no. 101. This was the first time the people of Ayodhya had heard of the welfare of the two brothers.

The ladies of the royal household at Ayodhya had regretted the king's decision to send the two young inexperienced princes with sage Vishwamitra to fight with demons. The queen mothers and others were extremely worried about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman. This is clearly brought out in 'Geetawali', Baal Kand, verse nos. 99—101.

Therefore in this context, the king felt as if his two beloved sons have been re-born when the messengers told him that they were hale and hearty. Like any loving father who hasn't heard about his sons who had gone away for a long time, Dasrath wanted to hear this pleasant news again and again because it was like music for his ears.

There was another reason for the king to 'repeatedly ask the messengers about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman'. For this, please read note of verse no. 8 herein below.]

जा दिन तें मुनि गए लवाई । तब तें आजु साँचि सुधि पाई ॥ ७ ॥
कहहु बिदेह कवन बिधि जाने । सुनि प्रिय बचन दूत मुसुकाने ॥ ८ ॥

jā dina tēm muni ga'e lavā'ī. taba tēm āju sām'ci sudhi pā'ī. 7.
kahahu bidēha kavana bidhi jānē. suni priya bacana dūta musukānē. 8.

Ever since the day the sage (Vishwamitra) had taken them away, this is the first time that I have got an authentic news about them (and their well-being)¹. (7)

Tell me, how did king Janak come to know about them (Lord Ram and Laxman)?²,

Hearing these pleasant words of Dasrath, the messengers smiled.³ [What they replied is narrated in the following Doha no. 291 and the verses that follow it.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 290 above. As has been observed in a note appended thereto, the news was deemed to be 'true, trustworthy, authentic and correct' because it bore the signature of sage Vishwamitra. We have read earlier that it was he who had instructed Janak to send the messengers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 287.

In the present verse no. 7, Dasrath acknowledges the authenticity and trustworthiness of this letter.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/99—1/101 we read that mothers Kaushalya and Sumitra were very worried about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman because ever since sage Vishwamitra took them away with him there was no news of the two brothers. It was at this juncture that the messengers arrived from Janakpur with the letter of king Janak. When Bharat heard the good news he rushed to inform his mother Sumitra—refer Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/101, stanza no. 4.

²Refer to note of verse no. 6 herein above. It should be noted here that the letter had come from the king of Janakpur, whereas the two brothers had gone with sage Vishwamitra to his forest hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice. Under normal circumstances the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were supposed to come back, escorted by one of the sage's disciples, after having completed the assigned task of eliminating the demons who were tormenting the sages. Sage Vishwamitra had not mentioned about taking them anywhere else.

So king Dasrath was amazed at the invitation from king Janak saying that Lord Ram is to marry his daughter Sita. It was not expected by him and beyond his imagination. That is why the king asked the messengers repeatedly about the news because he could not believe his ears, and then he wanted to cross-examine facts by seeing that the messengers' information is consistent when they are made to repeat it again and again.

³Why did the messengers "smile"? Well, the messengers were smart and clever. They could gauge the wonderment in Dasrath's mind. They were amazed that such a big king would become so dazed with the news that he would find it necessary to tell the messengers about the physical characteristics of the two princes as if they needed identification—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 291 above.

After all, the very purpose of the messengers coming to Dasrath was related to the two brothers, and this being the case it was absolutely unnecessary to ask them if they had recognized Lord Ram and Laxman as Dasrath had indeed done in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 291 above.

So, this is why the messengers "smiled". They were astonished that such a mighty king as Dasrath would act like an ordinary man of low intellect.]

दो०. सुनुहु महीपति मुकुट मनि तुह सम धन्य न कोउ ।
रामु लखनु जिन्ह के तनय बिस्व बिभूषन दोउ ॥ २९१ ॥

dōhā.

sunahu mahīpati mukuṭa mani tumha sama dhan'ya na kō'u.
rāmu lakhanu jinha kē tanaya bisva bibhūṣana dō'u. 291.

The messengers said—'Listen oh great king! You are like a crown-jewel in the community of kings. [That is, you are not only an ordinary king and simply an emperor but you are a like a 'gem' of the community of kings and emperors. You are indeed a great Emperor.]

[Now, the messengers give the reason why Dasrath was so special a king.] There is no one more fortunate and privileged than you in this world because Lord Ram and Laxman—who are like two magnificent adornments of the entire world—are your sons. (Doha no. 291)

[Note—King Dasrath is great because he has two wonderful sons, Lord Ram and Laxman. These two boys give glory to this world: the world has many glorious sons and fantastic heroes, but if all of them are to be compared to a king's crown then Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two crown-jewels. Their presence in the world makes the world worth living in. Just like even a beautiful woman shorn of her ornaments would look dull and unattractive, the two brothers adorn the world and shine in it like the sun and the moon do in the sky.

In other words, Lord Ram and Laxman are one of their own kind, having no one to match them.

This statement of the messengers is an answer to Dasrath's query in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 291 where the king has asked: "do tell me about their nature and behaviour".

Dasrath is honoured and feted for his great good fortune that he has Lord Ram and Laxman as his two sons elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 294 where the king is praised by his learned Guru, sage Vasistha, precisely for this reason; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7 where once again sage Vasistha repeats the same idea when he lauds king Dasrath after his death while trying to persuade Bharat to accept the crown of Ayodhya.

Dasrath's immensity of love and devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, had been so intense, so profound that it compelled the Lord who is the Supreme Father of this entire creation, who has a cosmic presence that is transcendental and beyond the grossness of the physical world to assume the form of a human being and become Dasrath's son. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 149—to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 150; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 4; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, the 1st line of Doha no. 209.

So definitely Dasrath was not an ordinary king or emperor: it is not easy and almost impossible to have the Lord of the world to come and become one's son. Hence, certainly king Dasrath was praiseworthy.]

चौ०. पूछन जोगु न तनय तुझरे । पुरुषसिंघ तिहु पुर उजिआरे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

pūchana jōgu na tanaya tumhārē. puruṣasiṅgha tihu pura uji'ārē. 1.

The messengers replied—'No enquiry is needed about your (king Dasrath's two) sons, for their glory and goodness are so excellent and profound that they don't need someone to highlight them as they make their presence self-evident. [In other words, no introduction is needed about the two brothers even as no introduction is needed for the sun as it rises in the sky at dawn.]

In fact, they occupy a unique position in the human race as if they were lions in the whole of humankind (puruṣasiṅgha), and they are so celebrated that their glory virtually illuminates and shines in the whole of the three worlds (consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world). (1)

[Note—This introductory praise of Lord Ram and Laxman by the messengers is in response to king Dasrath's outlining the physical characteristics of the two brothers, that one of them is dark complexioned and the other is of a fair complexion, and that they hold a bow and an arrow each in their hands (refer: Chaupai line no. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 291), to help the messengers understand about whom the king is asking.

So they reply that there is no need to identify the two brothers just as one does not need to be told who is a lion in a large group of animals because the lion stands out apart from the rest of them by the virtue of its majesty, its bearing and its authority as the mighty and unquestioned king of the jungle. Similarly, one need not be told about the sun in the sky because its presence is self-evident, because its light illuminates the whole world like no other celestial body.

There were thousands of kings and princes in the royal arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was held. But Lord Ram and Laxman were the cynosure of all eyes. Here, their physical well-built and muscular body as well as their general demeanours and bearing are compared to the lion. Just like the lion which is fearless and is not cowed down by any other animal, Lord Ram and Laxman were bold and fearless so much so that the renowned sage Parashuram, who is famous for his anger and ability to subdue even the mightiest of opponents, had to finally bow before them. Besides this feat, Lord Ram had so easily broken the bow of Lord Shiva that it appeared to me made of clay, and this feat was especially significant because thousands of kings could not muster enough combined strength to as much as move the same bow by an inch.

Lord Ram and Laxman have been compared to a 'lion' elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—e.g. (i) Sorth/Doha no. 208 Kha; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 234.

When the bow broke with a thunderous roar that was heard in all corners of the world, it literally declared to the entire living world consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world, in an unambiguous term, the stupendous glory of Lord Ram. The glory of the Lord was thus established by this single event in even the remotest corners of the world. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262.

It is just like the case of the sun rising at a specific spot with a limited area in the eastern horizon but spreading its illumination throughout the world so much so that even the remotest corners of the earth till the western horizon are lighted by its rays.

Comparing Lord Ram with the 'sun' as an illuminator of the world: refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 31.]

जिन्ह के जस प्रताप कें आगे । ससि मलीन रबि सीतल लागे ॥ २ ॥

jinha kē jasa pratāpa kēm āgē. sasi malīna rabi sītala lāgē. 2.

The moon looks dim and the sun seems cold when compared the immensity, the stupendity, the vastness, the quality and the dimension of their (Lord Ram and Laxman) glory, majesty and renown. (2)

[Note—The moon is the brightest object in the night sky, and the sun the brightest in the day sky. This is because there is no other object brighter than them in the sky at that time. But just as the moon would pale into insignificance if it remains in the sky after sunrise, as it often happens, and the heat of the sun would look inconsequential if one were to stand close to a raging fire during the day, the virtues, the glory and the majesty of Lord

Ram and Laxman were so great and profound that even the most majestic and powerful of kings and princes faded away when compared to them.

This observation of the messengers invoking the moon and the sun draws on the ideas reflected earlier during the actual bow-breaking ceremony.

Citing the metaphor of the 'moon': The royal heralds had declared that the bow was like a 'Rahu' vis-à-vis the strength of the kings which was compared to the 'moon', because the kings would be unable to resist being humiliated at the hands of the bow just as the moon cannot resist being darkened by the Rahu during the lunar eclipse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Citing the metaphor of the 'sun': When sage Parashuram had arrived angrily in the assembly, he has been compared to the 'sun' vis-à-vis the exalted family of sage Bhrigu which is compared to the lotus flower which opens its petals as soon as the sun rises. In other words, Parashuram gives glory to the entire family descending from sage Bhrigu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268.

The messengers chose these two heavenly bodies, the moon and the sun, because they shine in the heaven, and therefore are more exalted than any other illuminated object in the world. So the messengers imply that the two brothers, Laxman and Lord Ram, are not only like the moon and the sun respectively but even far better than them.]

तिन्ह कहँ कहिअ नाथ किमि चीन्हे । देखिअ रबि कि दीप कर लीन्हे ॥ ३ ॥

tinha kaham' kahi'a nātha kimi cīnhē. dēkhi'a rabi ki dīpa kara līnhē. 3.

Oh lord (a respectful way of addressing king Dasrath)! For such outstanding princes who have no parallel in this world, you say "how we recognised them?"!

Say, oh respected king, does one need a lamp to see the sun? [In other words, just like the sun does not need an introduction for its self, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman need no introduction for themselves; their presence itself is a sufficient introduction for these two noble brothers.] (3)

[Note—The messengers are responding to king Dasrath's query in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 291.

In verse no. 2 that precedes this present verse, the messengers have already compared Lord Ram and Laxman to the moon and the sun. Both these celestial bodies have their place of pride in the sky—i.e. the moon is the brightest object in the night sky, and the sun in the day sky. Millions of lamps lighted simultaneously would not be able to match the illumination of the sunlight.

Here in this verse the messengers want to stress that even as it is ridiculous and laughable for anyone to attempt to see the dazzling, splendid sun with help of the light of the lamp, it is impossible for anyone not to acknowledge the presence of the two wonderful, matchless, grand and glorious sons of king Dasrath, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, anywhere in the world, let alone only in Janakpur.

Just like the sun that makes its presence felt even without anyone specifically paying attention to it, for the sun's presence in itself is responsible for vanishing of the darkness of the night and revival of worldly activity in its full zest and dynamism, Lord Ram and Laxman do need to tell others about themselves to make the world realise who they are, or acknowledge their majestic presence.

Lord Ram and Laxman invite automatic attention and invoke natural reverence of all living beings. The aura of divinity and holiness, of graciousness and dignified presence

that effuses from both of them is as inspiring and as dynamic as the life-giving energy and warmth of the sun. Given this, what more introductions do they need?

Now, the messengers would elaborate upon what they say in this verse in the following verses, from Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293.]

सीय स्वयंवर भूप अनेका । समिटे सुभट एक तें एका ॥ ४ ॥

siya svayambara bhūpa anēkā. samitē subhaṭa ēka tēm ēkā. 4.

On the occasion of the marriage ceremony known as a ‘Swayambar’ in which the would-be groom of Sita was to be selected via the medium of an open competition¹, countless strong warrior-princes had assembled, each one of them a champion in his own right and better (stronger, more powerful, well-built, handsome, dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic, youthful, having a grand personality, an aura of authority and majesty, and so on and so forth) than his competitor.

[In other words, all those who participated in the Swayambar ceremony organised to select a groom for Sita, all the competitors or participants who had come, were great and majestic. All of them had great reputation and were renowned in their own right as famous kings and renowned warriors who were proud of their reputation and greatness as kings, princes and warriors. It was therefore an assembly of the mightiest and the greatest of kings and princes and warriors of the time on earth.] (4)

[Note—¹The “Swayambar” was a system prevalent in ancient India wherein a groom was selected for the girl to be married. The word “Swayambar” literally means “self-selection of the would-be groom”. Now, this meant either “the would-be bride’s self-selection of her groom”, or “the candidate’s self-selection by meeting certain declared criterion to become the groom”.

The process therefore had two primary variations: (i) In one option, the girl was allowed to choose a groom for herself by either walking down the row of invited candidates and putting a garland on the one she chose, or by any other means she preferred for such selection. (ii) In the other option, the parents of the girl declared a condition, and anyone who fulfilled this condition was selected as the groom.

In the case of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the first process was followed. In the case of Sita, the second option was followed.

Thus, in Sita’s case the condition set for her marriage was the breaking of the formidable bow of Lord Shiva which was kept since a long time in the family of kings belonging to the Nimi dynasty.

Now, not only was Sita renowned for her magnificent beauty, but her family, i.e. king Janak’s kingdom, was also very well known, had a great reputation, and was established in the world as one of the great dynasties of the time. So naturally, when her father king Janak declared his intention to marry her and invited the great kings and princes of the time to participate in the competition known as Swayambar, all the kings who had marriageable sons, and even those wished to take in more than one queen, came to Janakpur to try their luck.

The fact that there was a huge and unprecedented rush of competing kings and princes that ran into thousands of them vying with each other to marry Sita by meeting the condition of breaking of the bow is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 which says that “ten thousand kings (and princes) tried together to lift the bow (when individuals and small groups failed to

move it a bit), but the bow did not move from its position”. This fact is reiterated in verse no. 5 below also.]

संभु सरासनु काहुँ न टारा । हारे सकल बीर बरिआरा ॥ ५ ॥

sambhu sarāsanu kāhum̐ na ṭārā. hārē sakala bīra bari'ārā. 5.

But none of them was able to move Lord Shiva's bow even for a fraction of an inch. All the mightiest and greatest of warriors, who had prided themselves for their strength, invincibility, power and valour, were defeated in this competition. (5)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252. Here, king Janak has sternly chided all the thousands of competing kings and princes for their failure to move the bow. In the present verses, the messengers reiterate what their own king Janak had said earlier.]

तीनि लोक महँ जे भटमानी । सभ कै सकति संभु धनु भानी ॥ ६ ॥

tīni lōka maham̐ jē bhaṭamānī. sabha kai sakati sambhu dhanu bhānī. 6.

The might and self-respect of all those who were proud of their strength, power, invincibility and valour in the whole of the three worlds (i.e. who thought that there was no one more strong, powerful and valorous than them in the heaven, on the earth and in the nether world) were crushed (and reduced to dust) by the determined bow of Lord Shiva.

[That is, the bow was determined to show these haughty and pretentious kings and princes their right place in the pecking order of great and noble warriors in the entire world, not only on earth but even in the heaven and the nether worlds included.] (6)

सकड़ उठाइ सरासुर मेरू । सोउ हियँ हारि गयउ करि फेरू ॥ ७ ॥

saka'i uṭhā'i sarāsura mērū. sō'u hiyam̐ hāri gaya'u kari phērū. 7.

Even he (a reference to Banasur)¹ who could easily lift the celestial mountain known as Mt. Meru, which is the abode of the king of gods (known as Indra), had lost heart and courage to even attempt to lift the bow. So, preferring to save his face by instead of being defeated openly by the bow, he circumambulated it (i.e. went round it in a circle)² and went away, implying that he has accepted defeat. (7)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

²The bow belonged to Lord Shiva who was a deity universally worshipped by the entire demon race, including Banasur and Ravana, the king of Lanka as well as of the demon race. The process of going round anything in a circle is to show respect to it.

In this particular case of Banasur, we can make two assumptions:--

(i) One is that when he learnt that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva, he did not want to show his disrespect to it by attempting to break it. So he decided to pay homage to it by circumambulating it, and then going away.

(ii) The second assumption is based on what the messengers said in this verse—that when Banasur learnt that the marriage was linked to the breaking of the bow of Shiva, he realized that it was beyond his means to do so. He thought to himself that if he made an attempt and failed then two negative things would happen simultaneously:—One, he will become a laughing stock in the community of demons as well as the rest of the world as his inability to break the bow would puncture his reputation of being an invincible and a mighty warrior who was so strong that he could lift even the mountain where the king of gods lives, i.e. Mt. Meru. And two, he would unnecessarily antagonize Lord Shiva by showing disrespect to the Lord's bow inspite of knowing fully well that he won't be able to move, lift and break it.

Therefore, Banasur thought that no purpose would be served in making a joke of himself by making a futile attempt to break the bow.

In an assembly of great warriors which was called 'not to offer worship to the bow' but to 'break it', such an abject surrender by Banasur and his quietly going away was tantamount to accepting defeat.

Now the question arises that there were other kings also in the assembly who had desisted from attempting to break the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 245; (ii) From Sortha/Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246. Does this mean that they too had accepted defeat? Well, the answer is found in the verses themselves: these kings had the vision of the Supreme Father and the Holy Mother of creation in the physical forms of Lord Ram and Sita respectively (refer: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 246). Further, the same idea is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 242.

Why was it so? The reason is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241 that essentially says that "everyone looked at Lord Ram according to his liking, spiritual status, and mental setup".

In other words, the good and noble kings who had come just to oblige king Janak and honour his invitation—because refusal would mean a rebuke for Janak and a show of discourtesy to him besides being an undiplomatic gesture for them—but had no intention to participate in the competition of breaking the bow, did not feel defeated and humiliated at all. This is proved because they cheerfully preferred to remain seated and witness the full event like neutral observers. They had even tried to dissuade the greedy kings to refrain from trying to make a mockery of themselves by trying to break the bow because they won't be able to do so—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 246.

So we see the difference between Banasur and these kings—whereas Banasur had 'gone away' from the assembly out of fear that Janak might invite him to come on stage and try his luck, these kings would have cheerfully told Janak that they had come as a friend and guest of the king, and not as competitors or suitors for his daughter! This therefore answers the question 'whether these good kings too were defeated'? The answer is: 'no'.]

जेहिं कौतुक सिवसैलु उठावा । सोउ तेहि सभाँ पराभउ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhiṁ kautuka sivasailu uṭhāvā. sō'u tēhi sabhām̐ parābha'u pāvā. 8.

Even he who had lifted the mountain of Lord Shiva (a reference to the demon king Ravana) had accepted defeat in that assembly (like Banasur had). (8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Refer also to the note appended to verse no. 7 herein above.]

दो०. तहाँ राम रघुबंस मनि सुनिअ महा महिपाल ।
भंजेउ चाप प्रयास बिनु जिमि गज पंकज नाल ॥ २९२ ॥

dōhā.

tahām' rāma raghubansa mani suni'a mahā mahipāla.
bhanjē'u cāpa prayāsa binu jimi gaja paṅkaja nāla. 292.

Listen oh great king (“mahipāla”)! In that assembly (as mentioned in Chaupai line nos. 4-8 above), Lord Ram, who is a jewel in the dynasty of king Raghu, had broken the bow without any effort just like an elephant breaks the soft stem of the lotus flower. (Doha no. 292)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 255 that says a similar thing. In this reference, the citizens of Janakpur are praying to the gods etc. to make it possible that Lord Ram can break the bow as easily as if it was a soft stalk of the lotus flower.

An elephant obviously won't have the slightest trouble in breaking the delicate and soft stem of the lotus flower when it is so mighty that it can uproot huge trees by the immense strength of its muscular body. Likewise, Lord Ram had no problems lifting and breaking the bow of Lord Shiva.]

चौ०. सुनि सरोष भृगुनायकु आए । बहुत भाँति तिन्ह आँखि देखाए ॥ १ ॥
देखि राम बलु निज धनु दीन्हा । करि बहु बिनय गवनु बन कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī sarōṣa bhr̥gunāyaku ā'ē. bahuta bhām̐ti tinha āṁkhi dēkhā'ē. 1.
dēkhi rāma balu nija dhanu dīnhā. kari bahu binaya gavanu bana kīnhā. 2.

Hearing about the breaking of the bow (of Lord Shiva), the chief in the family of sage Bhrigu (i.e. sage Parashuram) came angrily to the venue to avenge the bow's breaking. He was furious and tried his best to brow-beat and scare them off (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) into submission. (1)

But by and by he (Parashuram) realised the innate strength, self-confidence, courage and invincibility of Lord Ram, and therefore he gave his own bow to the Lord, prayed to him in many ways (to ask for forgiveness), and finally retreated to the forest (to do penances). (2)

[Note—These two lines sum-up the entire episode related to sage Parashuram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

Treating the version of the messengers as representative of the way the masses would remember the incident in future, we can safely say that only two points were important—one, that a furious sage Parashuram had come to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow, and two, that he realised that the individual who broke the bow was not an ordinary person but someone with supreme powers inasmuch as it was not at all possible for a human being to play fools with the mighty bow of Lord Shiva who is known as a 'Maha-deva', a 'Great God'.

This leads us to an interesting conclusion: If sage Parashuram could not harm either of the two brothers, then it was established beyond doubt that they were indeed 'invincible and unconquerable' in this world. The might and strength of Parashuram was well-documented and well-known; he had spared none who ever dared to confront him. This was the first time in his career as a valiant and gallant warrior who had never understood the meaning of the words defeat or surrender that he not only had to submit himself unconditionally before his adversary but also had to 'pray for forgiveness'.

What more was needed to announce the arrival of the Supreme Lord on earth as this entire episode unfolded before the watchful eyes of the entire community of great kings and princes who ruled the earth and lorded over it at that time. What better opportunity could ever be found to declare to the whole world about the arrival of a Supreme Authority and Power on earth? The incident of sage Parashuram was deftly devised by the wise Creator to make this solemn declaration to the world at one go—that the Lord has finally arrived in flesh and blood to helm the affairs of the mortal world as the latter's Emperor and King, and therefore all the mischief mongers should be wary of their behaviour now as indiscipline and breaking of the laws of Nature would no longer be tolerated, and that a new era would emerge which would go down in history as "Ram Rajya" which would be a stellar example of ideal good governance, good behaviour, good virtues, good character, ethics, morality, righteousness, propriety, probity and so on and so forth—in brief, the practical observance of the grand principles of 'Dharma'. This is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 26.]

राजन रामु अतुलबल जैसैं । तेज निधान लखनु पुनि तैसैं ॥ ३ ॥

कंपहिं भूप बिलोकत जाकैं । जिमि गज हरि किसोर के ताकैं ॥ ४ ॥

rājana rāmu atulabala jaisēṁ. tēja nidhāna lakhanu puni taisēṁ. 3.
kampahim bhūpa bilōkata jākēṁ. jimi gaja hari kisōra kē tākēṁ. 4.

Oh King! Lord Ram has unparalleled dynamism, energy, strength, powers and valour, and Laxman too is a mine of equal glory and radiance. (3)

Laxman's glory, courage, strength, self-confidence and dynamism are of such stupendous proportions that all the kings tremble when he looks at them just like the case of an elephant getting frightened when a young lion looks at it angrily.¹ (4)

[Note—¹This verse refers to two events: (i) The first was when all the frustrated kings who had failed to break the bow had stood up in revolt to capture Lord Ram and Laxman, grab Sita and fight Janak if he sides with the two brothers. At that time Laxman had looked at them with red angry eyes, prepared to face and punish them single-handedly

like a lion fearlessly attacks a herd of wild elephants and kills any one of them who dares to fight the lion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 267.

(ii) The other occasion was when king Janak had expressed his anguish and frustration by declaring that the earth seems to be devoid of real brave and strong warriors when none of the invited kings could as much as move the bow even a fraction of an inch let alone lifting it and breaking it. At that time also, Laxman had publicly used stern language to denounce king Janak and strongly objected to his uncalled-for observations that the earth was devoid of warriors when Lord Ram is personally present in the assembly and was not even given a chance to lift the bow. Normally this public display of disrespect for the host king was punishable by immediate imprisonment, but Janak did not have the courage to face Laxman, and so he humbly kept quiet. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.

That is, even as a junior king gets frightened when the emperor or another more powerful contemporary king looks at him with annoyance, the entire assembly of kings could not muster strength to stand up against the angry tirade of Laxman. Even king Janak, who was the host king and elderly, did not dare to reprimand Laxman for his impertinence for saying angry words in front of the whole assembly attended by a huge gathering of great and mighty kings of the time.

This metaphor of an elephant getting terrified at the sight of an angry lion looking at it—because the latter would surely kill the former if it decides to do so, notwithstanding the physical size and strength of the elephant—has also been used earlier in the same context as it is used in the present verse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 267.]

देव देखि तव बालक दोऊ । अब न आँखि तर आवत कोऊ ॥ ५ ॥

dēva dēkhi tava bālaka dō'ū. aba na āṁkhi tara āvata kō'ū. 5.

Oh Lord! Now that we have seen your two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman), no one catches our eyes (attention) any longer.

[During our travels across the world as messengers of king Janak, we have had the opportunity to see, observe, meet and interact with countless kings and princes of varied denomination and stature, but now we can say with certainty that we have never seen anyone who will match your two sons, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman. These two brothers are one of their only kind, being unparalleled and peerless in the whole world.] (5)

[Note—The messengers have already told the kings how incomparable the two brothers were in Doha no. 291 and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it. They have been called ‘the jewel of the world’, ‘a lion amongst men’, as well as ‘to the brilliant sun and the moon before which all other heavenly bodies fade into insignificance’.

The messengers had capped their observance by asking ‘if anyone would need a earthen lamp to search for the sun whose presence is self-evident?’]

दूत बचन रचना प्रिय लागी । प्रेम प्रताप बीर रस पागी ॥ ६ ॥

dūta bacana racanā priya lāgī. prēma pratāpa bīra rasa pāgī. 6.

The words of praise and the way the messengers extolled the virtues of the two brothers by using metaphors and laudatory words for Lord Ram and Laxman) were liked very much by everyone present there.

The messengers' cheerful expressions and the eloquent words used by them to praise the two brothers, lauding their exemplary glory and honouring them for their matchless qualities, were both sincere as well as deeply soaked in emotions of love, affection, respect and honour for the two brothers. (6)

[Note—In other words, the messengers were not falsely flattering Lord Ram and Laxman just to please king Dasrath and his court. What they said came straight from their hearts. They were honest to the core in their observation about the two brothers.]

सभा समेत राउ अनुरागे । दूतन्ह देन निछावरि लागे ॥ ७ ॥

कहि अनीति ते मूदहिं काना । धरमु बिचारि सबहिं सुखु माना ॥ ८ ॥

sabhā samēta rā'u anurāgē. dūtanha dēna nichāvari lāgē. 7.

kahi anīti tē mūdahiṁ kānā. dharamu bicāri sabahiṁ sukhu mānā. 8.

The king (Dasrath), along with his entire court, was overwhelmed with gratitude for the messengers. All of them began showering lavish gifts upon the messengers to express their happiness and joy as well as to honour these guests who have brought in good news. (7)

But the messengers, however, closed their ears¹, protesting that it was improper for them to be so honoured and gifted because they had simply answered the query of the king in a dispassionate and honest manner. Hence, they do not deserve any special treatment or honour.

When the messengers thus refused to accept the gifts and largesse, everyone liked their attitude because it was in line with the principles of Dharma². (8)

[Note—¹When the gifts were being showered and praises being heaped on the messengers, they raised their hands in astonishment because they, being ordinary messengers sent by one king to another to convey a message, had not expected such great honour that is generally reserved for special royal guests of the kingdom. They had also not expected such effulgent outburst of emotional affections when even the king himself joined his court to honour the messengers. So they raised their hands to avoid accepting any gift. It's like them exclaiming—“Oh my god! Please do not show such honour to us. We are not royals but ordinary messengers just carrying out our assigned duties. We told you the truth as we saw and witnessed it. It was not intended to gain honour or special treatment. We are overwhelmed with the warmth you are showing, but please refrain from honouring us because we are just doing our duties as messengers should.”

The expression “closed their ears” is a gesture that means two things here—(i) One is that the messengers were so taken aback by the unexpectedly grand and warm treatment that was accorded to them that they raised their hands to their ears or heads in utter astonishment. (ii) The other reason is that perhaps the king and his courtiers were simultaneously praising these messengers with laudatory words of honour along with the showering of material gifts so much so that the messengers felt very embarrassed and

humbled. They expressed their surprise and gratitude by lifting their hands because messengers are not supposed to accept such honour.

²This is also the reason why no one took offense at their refusal to accept these gifts because this refusal was in accordance with the standard practice of messengers not accepting any honour or gift from the person whom they meet to convey a message on behalf of their master. If the messengers had accepted any gift then it would indicate that they were either greedy or ill-paid because it is only in these situations that any person would accept material things from anyone inspite of it being improper to do so.]

दो०. तब उठि भूप बसिष्ठ कहँ दीन्हि पत्रिका जाइ ।
कथा सुनाई गुरहि सब सादर दूत बोलाइ ॥ २९३ ॥

dōhā.

taba uṭhi bhūpa basiṣṭa kahum̐ dīnhi patrikā jā'i.
kathā sunā'ī gurahi saba sādara dūta bōlā'i. 293.

The king got up from his seat and went to his royal priest, sage Vasistha, and gave him the letter (that was sent by Janak and countersigned by sage Vishwamitra).

He told his Guru (moral preceptor; royal priest Vasistha) the whole story (about the arrival of the messengers and the news they had brought about the two brothers).

Then he summoned the messengers with due respect. (Doha no. 293)

[Note—The “showing of respect to the messengers” means that the king treated them as royal guests instead of as servants of another king. These messengers were given the same respect and treatment that another royal guest would have been accorded.

It should be noted that the king has ‘given the letter’ to Vasistha instead of reading it aloud for him as he had done earlier on three occasions when he had read the letter aloud himself in his court. This is to show respect to his Guru, sage Vasistha. The Guru is learned and wise; he does not need anyone to explain to him the matter from a written text.

The king summed up the news in his own words and then called in the messengers so they can describe the details for the benefit of the Guru, besides answering any questions that the latter may ask.]

चौ०. सुनि बोले गुर अति सुखु पाई । पुन्य पुरुष कहँ महि सुख छाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sunī bōlē gura ati sukhu pā'ī. pun'ya puruṣa kahum̐ mahi sukha chā'ī. 1.

The Guru (sage Vasistha) was highly pleased on hearing the wonderful news. He told king Dasrath—‘For a virtuous man (like you, oh king) who has accumulated religious merit by his noble life as well as righteous deeds and actions, one who is committed to

upholding the laws of Dharma, the earth is rich with the boon of happiness, joy and pleasures; there is no shortage of this boon for such a man anywhere in this world. (1)

[Note—The sage praises king Dasrath for being a “Punya Purush”. The word “Punya” means merit that is accrued when a person does something good and righteous. It is opposite to doing “Paap”, which in effect means committing sins and indulging in unethical and unlawful activities that go against the principles of good conduct as envisioned in the scriptures.

The very fact that the Supreme Being decided to become a son of Dasrath in the form of Lord Ram proves that he was not an ordinary soul, not an ordinary king, but one who had accumulated such a huge treasury of religious merit that the Lord could not refuse the king’s wish to have him as his son. So in effect, sage Vasistha was merely stating a fact, and not flattering Dasrath. Refer Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that follow herein below.

Sage Vasistha has heaped praises on Dasrath once again later on in a different context. When he died and the royal assembly was called to anoint Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, on the throne of Ayodhya (because Lord Ram had gone to the forest exile for fourteen years to honour his father’s word-of-honour that was pending for redemption with Kaikeyi, the Lord’s step-mother, which she had exploited to get her own son Bharat on the throne), Vasistha had minced no words in profusely praising king Dasrath while he tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown in the absence of Lord Ram. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174.]

जिमि सरिता सागर महुँ जाहीं । जद्यपि ताहि कामना नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
तिमि सुख संपति बिनहिं बोलाएँ । धरमसील पहिं जाहिं सुभाएँ ॥ ३ ॥

jimi saritā sāgara mahum̐ jāhīm̐. jadyapi tāhi kāmanā nāhīm̐. 2.
timi sukha sampati binahim̐ bōlā'ēm̐. dharamasīla pahim̐ jāhīm̐ subhā'ēm̐. 3.

Just as countless rivers voluntarily flow into the ocean though the latter does not ask them to come to it or has no desire to take-in their waters (to replenish its stock of water with that of the rivers’ as the ocean has an endless supply of it) [1], various types of happiness, joy, prosperity, affluence, success and well-being go un-invited and unasked for to a man who follows the path of Dharma, or the path of virtuousness, righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, probity and propriety [2]. (1-2)

[Note—This idea of rivers symbolising happiness, joy, prosperity, affluence, success and well-being flowing in constantly into the ocean represented by a man who follows the path of Dharma is also reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 1 which describes the glorious state of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram has come to live. It essentially says that “the fourteen divisions of the world were like a huge mountain with as many peaks, the clouds symbolising meritorious deeds showered rain symbolising all-round joy and happiness; and the water of this rain formed into gorgeous rivers overflowing with the water of happiness, joy, success, prosperity and well-being that cascaded down from the lofty heights of the mountain upon the plains of the earth, frothing and boiling over with these aforesaid virtues, to finally find its way into the ocean represented by the city of Ayodhya”.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, stanza no. 2 of Doha no. 39 Kha which refers to the fact that the days of a person who follows the path of Dharma are

passed happily and cheerfully, with all sorts of successes and prosperity being accessible by him.]

तुह गुर बिप्र धेनु सुर सेबी । तसि पुनीत कौसल्या देबी ॥ ४ ॥

tumha gura bipra dhēnu sura sēbī. tasi punīta kausalyā dēbī. 4.

You diligently and devotedly serve your Guru (moral preceptor)¹, Vipra (Brahmins and other elderly and learned members of the society), Dhenu (cows regarded as holy), and the Surs (gods). The honourable queen Kaushalya follows your example and is no less devout than you. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129 in which sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he, in his original form as the cosmic Lord known as Brahm, the Supreme Being, should dwell in the Mana (heart and inner-self) of a person who, inter alia, adores his Guru more than the Lord himself.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 172 which say that a person who does not respect Brahmins and obeys his Guru is regrettable.]

सुकृती तुह समान जग माहीं । भयउ न है कोउ होनेउ नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

तुह ते अधिक पुन्य बड़ काकें । राजन राम सरिस सुत जाकें ॥ ६ ॥

sukṛtī tumha samāna jaga māhīm. bhaya'u na hai kō'u hōnē'u nāhīm. 5.
tumha tē adhika pun'ya baṛa kākēm. rājana rāma sarisa suta jākēm. 6.

A person has not taken birth till now nor would ever take birth in this world in the future also who has greater spiritual merit and religious credit than what you have gotten¹. (5)

Say indeed oh great king, who else can be said to be more spiritually meritorious, religiously creditworthy and fit for the highest honour reserved for a pious soul than you are because you have the good fortune to have Lord Ram (the Supreme Being in a personified form) as your son²! (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 173; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 209.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 291; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 209.]

बीर बिनीत धरम ब्रत धारी । गुन सागर बर बालक चारी ॥ ७ ॥

तुह कहूँ सर्व काल कल्याणा । सजहु बरात बजाइ निसाना ॥ ८ ॥

bīra binīta dharama brata dhārī. guna sāgara bara bālaka cārī. 7.
tumha kahūṁ sarba kāla kalyānā. sajahu barāta bajā'i nisānā. 8.

Who is more fortunate than you who has four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) who are epitomes of the grand virtues of valour, courage, strength,

politeness and civility, and at the same time are diligent followers of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility, ethics and morality).

In fact, your four sons are like oceans of these grand and glorious virtues (i.e. they do not lack in any of these great qualities just like the ocean which does not have shortage of water in it)¹. (7)

Well-being and good fortunes are always yours in all phases of time and life!

Well now, first of all make arrangements for assembling a grand marriage party with proper fanfare, and secondly, order that the kettle-drums be played (to celebrate the auspicious news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita as well as the well-being of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman). (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173.

Three great virtues have been listed in verse no. 7 as follows—(i) “*bīra*” meaning a person who is brave, strong, courageous and valiant; (ii) “*binīta*” meaning one who is polite, courteous and civil inspite of possessing great powers and authority; one who never shows himself or boasts of his authority, powers, strength, abilities, stature or prowess; and (iii) “*dharama brata dhārī*” meaning who has taken the vow to uphold the laws of Dharma. In other words, all the four brothers possessed these auspicious and laudable qualities in them in great abundance like the ocean which has no dearth of water in it.]

दो०. चलहु बेगि सुनि गुर बचन भलेहिं नाथ सिरु नाइ ।

भूपति गवने भवन तब दूतन्ह बासु देवाइ ॥ २९४ ॥

dōhā.

calahu bēgi suni gura bacana bhalēhim nātha siru nā'i.
bhūpati gavanē bhavana taba dūtanha bāsu dēvā'i. 294.

Hearing the orders of the Guru (sage Vasistha) to proceed to Janakpur with the marriage party as soon as possible, the king thanked him and bowed his head before him, saying—‘Alright Lord, it will be done.’

The king then went to his palace after giving suitable lodging place to the messengers (of king Janak). (Doha no. 294)

[Note—The next series of verses will narrate the preparations for the grand marriage party that will leave Ayodhya for Janakpur to attend the royal marriage of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. राजा सबु रनिवास बोलाई । जनक पत्रिका बाचि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

सुनि संदेसु सकल हरषानीं । अपर कथा सब भूप बखानीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rājā sabu ranivāsa bōlāī. janaka patrikā bāci sunāī. 1.
 suni sandēsu sakala haraṣānīm. apara kathā saba bhūpa bakhānīm. 2.

The king summoned all the ladies of the royal palace and read aloud the letter of king Janak to them. (1)

Hearing the message (contained in the letter), every one of them were overjoyed. The king then narrated other related good news that he had heard orally from the messengers. (2)

[Note—The messengers had arrived in the royal court where the invitation letter of king Janak was presented by them to king Dasrath. Obviously, no ladies of the royal household were present there.

The king has first read out the letter of invitation from Janak which contained the brief message that Lord Ram had broken the bow and was automatically selected as suitable groom for Sita, Janak's daughter. King Dasrath was invited to come and join in the celebrations. Other details of what had really happened, such as the incident of sage Parashuram, and the general news of the two brothers were narrated orally by the messengers.

It must be noted here that when Dasrath had met his Guru, sage Vasistha, the messengers were summoned in person to enable the Guru to interview them if he so wished and clarify any doubts he may have in his mind. It was necessary to do so as a principle of state policy because a wise king always consulted his close advisors and allowed them to analyse any given situation before any decision is reached by him to ensure that no crucial point is missed. When the wise Guru was satisfied with the letter of king Janak as well as by his interaction with the messengers, and ordered Dasrath to make preparation for the marriage party, the king was doubly sure that everything was alright and there was no subterfuge in anything. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 293.

Thus assured of the authenticity of the letter and its contents, as well as of the integrity of the messengers, the king had given the guest messengers proper lodging place to relax and feel comfortable after the long journey they had travelled from the far away land of Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 294.

It is natural to assume that Dasrath had met the royal ladies, the queens and other members of the royal household, in his palace, rather than in the royal court, because ladies traditionally stayed inside palaces. A reading of the following verses will also endorse this view where we shall see that females are being referred to in the narration instead of males.

In Tulsidas' another classic book titled "Geetawali" we read that the mothers were very worried about the well-being of Lord Ram ever since he had gone to the forest with sage Vishwamitra. So when the exceptionally good tidings were brought in by the messengers—that not only were the two brothers happy and fine but that Lord Ram has achieved a rare feat by breaking a formidable bow which none of the bravest and the mightiest of kings and princes that lived on earth at that time could move even an inch, and the icing on the cake was that this has entitled him to get the hand of Sita in marriage, an achievement for which all these kings and princes had staked their reputation and had failed—a spontaneous eruption of joy and exhilaration was natural and expected. Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 99—101.]

प्रेम प्रफुल्लित राजहिं रानी । मनहुँ सिखिनि सुनि बारिद बानी ॥ ३ ॥

मुदित असीस देहिं गुर नारीं । अति आनंद मगन महतारीं ॥ ४ ॥

prēma praphullita rājahirṃ rānī. manahum̐ sikhini suni bārida bānī. 3.
mudita asīsa dēhirṃ gura nārīṃ. ati ānanda magana mahatārīṃ. 4.

The king and the queen(s)¹ were overjoyed and ecstatic with emotions of love and affection just like pea-hens feel exhilarated when they hear the rumblings of the rain-bearing cloud in the distant sky². (3)

The Guru's wife (named Arundhati) was very delighted and she liberally blessed them (the queens as well as the king), which in turn made the mother(s)³ exceedingly happy and cheerful (because blessings from one's Guru's wife is a harbinger of good fortunes and all round well-being) (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had many queens, but we read about only three who were the chief ones. They were—(i) Kaushalya who was the chief queen and the mother of Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers; (ii) Sumitra, the second queen and the mother of Laxman; and (iii) Kaikeyi, the third queen and the mother of Bharat and Shatrughan.

All these queens lived like sisters, and they treated all the four brothers equally as if all of them were their own sons. Later on unfortunately however, we shall read that Kaikeyi became selfish and prevailed on the king to send his eldest son, Lord Ram, to the forest so that her own elder son Bharat could ascend the throne. But that happened much later on in the story after the four brothers were married and settled down in Ayodhya, and hence it is not a matter to be discussed at this juncture when we are reading about the days when celebrations are underway and preparations are being undertaken for Lord Ram's marriage.

So, when the happy tidings arrived from the far away land of Janakpur, all the mothers were very jubilant with excitement. It is not that the king wasn't worried about the welfare of his two beloved sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, but he used to be so pre-occupied with affairs of the kingdom that he didn't find time to brood and unnecessarily disturb the peace of his mind because he knew very well the abilities and mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra in whose custody he had put the two brothers. Therefore, king Dasrath hadn't worried too much about the well-being of the two brothers because he was sure that they are well-protected under the patronage of the mighty sage Vishwamita. But the queens were a worried lot, like all mothers usually are, about the welfare of their sons Lord Ram and Laxman. While a father would rather be stern with his sons and prefer to train them to face the realities of the harsh life in this world, a mother would wince at such a thought and would rather like her son to be physically comfortable than endure any hardship. So we see here in Geetawali verses referred to herein above that only the mothers are shown to be worried, and not king Dasrath.

²The peacock is so happy when it hears the rumbling of the clouds that it opens its plumes and begins to dance. The metaphor is so apt because the queen-mothers were eagerly waiting to hear some good news about the two brothers who had gone away to a distant land just like this bird, which keeps its ears open during the hot summer days, eagerly waiting to hear the sound of the rumbling cloud which would mean that rains are round the corner. Rains are harbingers of life, greenery and vibrancy on earth; they bring cheer to all the living beings because not only do they provide nectar in the form of rains to cool the hot surface of the earth but they also ensure that life is not extinguished for want of water, the elixir of life. The peacock celebrates this event on behalf of Mother Nature.

So, when the exceptionally good news about the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, arrived from a faraway land, the queen-mothers were as happy and exhilarated as the pea-hen when she hears the rumble of the rain-bearing clouds.

³The Guru's wife would bless the queens just as the Guru would bless the king. So, Arundhati, sage Vasistha's wife, blessed all the queens for their own happiness and the happiness of their beloved sons, which naturally made them feel grateful to the Guru's wife and become cheerful.]

लेहिं परस्पर अति प्रिय पाती । हृदयँ लगाइ जुड़ावहिं छाती ॥ ५ ॥

राम लखन कै कीरति करनी । बारहिं बार भूपबर बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

lēhiṁ paraspara ati priya pātī. hṛdayam' lagā'i juṛāvahiṁ chātī. 5.
rāma lakhana kai kīrati karani. bārahiṁ bāra bhūpabara baranī. 6.

They took the lovable letter one by one, and held it close to their bosoms (as a token of their appreciation for the news it contained as well as the warmth of feeling and ecstasy that it ignited). By doing so, all of them felt contented. (5)

The king repeatedly narrated and lauded the great deeds of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, and the resultant fame and reputation that they had acquired for themselves as a reward of their astounding successes and stupendous achievements. (6)

[Note—The letter of king Janak was a sort of a marriage invitation card, and therefore it had limited itself to mentioning only about the bow-breaking ceremony where Lord Ram had successfully broken the bow and had got the reward in the form of marriage with Sita, the daughter of king Janak.

The rest of the developments were narrated orally by the messengers. They told Dasrath about the liberation of Ahilya, the slaying of the ferocious demoness Tadka, and the successful protection of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which entailed the killing of other ferocious demons led by their chiefs Subahau and Marich. These incidents are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 209—to Doha no. 211.

Refer also to—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 264; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 293.

There are verses in "Geetawali" which also say the same thing: refer—Baal Kand, verse nos. 102, stanza nos. 3-7.

The king was so overwhelmed with joy at the news of the great deeds and the stupendous achievements of his two noble sons that he couldn't have enough of it; he was so excited that he kept repeating the news again and again to express his boundless joy and unfettered happiness on receiving this good news. Like any other father, he felt exceedingly proud and exhilarated to learn of the magnificent achievements of his beloved sons that had established their glories throughout the world in a single go.]

मुनि प्रसादु कहि द्वार सिधाए । रानिन्ह तब महिदेव बोलाए ॥ ७ ॥

दिए दान आनंद समेता । चले बिप्रबर आसिष देता ॥ ८ ॥

muni prasādu kahi dvāra sidhā'ē. rāninha taba mahidēva bōlā'ē. 7.
di'ē dāna ānanda samētā. calē biprabara āsiṣa dētā. 8.

Thanking their Guru (sage Vasistha) for his blessings that has made this good fortune come true, the king proceeded towards the palace's gate (to give orders and start preparations for the marriage party, as well as to make an official announcement to start celebrations in the city of Ayodhya).

Meanwhile, the queens summoned the 'Mahi-Devas' (the "gods of the earth", an epithet used for the Brahmins because they are shown the same respect that one reserves for the gods in the heaven) [7], and cheerfully made gifts to them (by way of liberal donations). The Brahmins went away contented, blessing the queens liberally [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Giving alms and donations and making charities are regarded as meritorious and religious deeds, and when any good event takes place in a household or some good news comes, it is normal practice in Hindu households to make gifts to Brahmins.]

सो०. जाचक लिए हँकारि दीन्हि निछावरि कोटि बिधि ।
चिरु जीवहुँ सुत चारि चक्रबर्ति दसरत्थ के ॥ २९५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

jācaka li'ē hamkāri dīnhi nichāvari kōṭi bidhi.
ciru jīvahum' suta cāri cakrabarti dasarat'tha kē. 295.

[After the Brahmins were gone—] The beggars were the next to be summoned. Liberal alms of various types were given to them in abundance. All of them blessed the royal household of the king, saying in unison—'Long live the four sons of Emperor Dasrath ("cakrabarti dasarat'tha").' (Sortha 295)

[Note—When one's wishes are fulfilled one is inclined to open up his heart and loosen up his purse strings to celebrate the occasion, to commemorate the event. Even an ordinary man with limited means at his disposal would become very magnanimous and charitable on such rare occasions. And here we are talking about a 'great king' who was no less than an Emperor—"Chakravarti".

So it is natural to expect huge and liberal donations and charities being made by Dasrath, largesse that should be befitting of his exalted stature as a great Emperor of the time, to celebrate the arrival of the wonderful news of the marriage of his eldest son Lord Ram along with the astounding deeds that he and his younger brother Laxman had done to bring great laurels and honour to Dasrath's present family as well as to the dynasty to which he belonged. Any father would be proud of this development.]

चौ०. कहत चले पहिरे पट नाना । हरषि हने गहगहे निसाना ॥ १ ॥

caupā'i.

kahata calē pahirēm paṭa nānā. haraṣi hanē gahagahē nisānā. 1.

As they (i.e. the Brahmins as well as other alms-seekers who were invited by the queens and the king to accept gifts and donations) left the palace adorned in fine clothes and other decorations of various kinds that were given to them, they were jubilant and excited as they enthusiastically proclaimed the glory of the king and his sons in loud and cheerful voices.

As soon as the auspicious news spread in the city, there was a spontaneous eruption of the sound of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums. (1)

[Note—The news of the arrival of the messengers and the letter they had brought from Janak, along with a summary of its contents, had already percolated down in the city. The air was filled with excitement as everyone waited for an official announcement of the good news from their king. So as soon as the Brahmins and alms-seekers returned from the palace, terribly excited and literally jumping with joy, showing off their newly acquired robes of honour and magnificent clothes and other decorations that the king and the queens had granted them, an uproarious cheer spread like the thunder of lightening throughout the city of Ayodhya, and the enthusiasm was so profound that the citizens could not desist themselves from playing the musical instruments even before the king could summon his official heralds and make any announcement to start celebrating.

This deduction will be very clear when we read the next verse no. 2 herein below which says that “when the people got the news, there was celebration in each household--”. In other words, the playing of the kettle-drums as mentioned in the present verse no. 1 was prior to the point of time when the news that the king has ordered to start celebrations had reached the common man.

There was a sudden surge of vibrant and pulsating energy of happiness and joy that was palpable throughout the city, and the thunderous roar of the kettle-drums that was sounded all of a sudden was an audible and an external sign of it.]

समाचार सब लोगन्ह पाए । लागे घर घर होन बधाए ॥ २ ॥

samācāra saba lōganha pā'ē. lāgē ghara ghara hōna badhā'ē. 2.

When the citizens (of Ayodhya) heard the auspicious news (of the forthcoming marriage of their beloved prince Lord Ram with the daughter of king Janak, named Sita), festivities and thanks-giving started in each individual household of the city. (2)

[Note—As soon as the kettle-drums started playing, their loud sound alerted even those who lived on the outskirts of the huge city that some good news has arrived because such musical instruments were played only during royal celebrations. Since there was no prior news of any special event that was to be organized by the king, and the word had already spread that some messengers have come with the news of the two princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, from some far away land, so the mere sound of the vigorous beating of the kettle-drums as mentioned in verse no. 1 was sufficient to make the citizens correctly guess that it definitely means that some good news about the two brothers has arrived. And this surely means that it is time to celebrate.

One will not miss this opportunity to observe that the entire population of the kingdom of Ayodhya had loved their king Dasrath as well as Lord Ram. The fact is that the people loved Lord Ram profoundly, passionately, and more than anything else in this world, even more than their own families and households. The extent of their dedication

and love for the Lord will be starkly clear later on in Ayodhya Kand of this great epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ when we read how the whole city, overwhelmed with grief and its inability to live without their beloved Lord Ram, had followed the Lord from behind as he went out of the city for his forest exile. The citizens determined that their welfare lies only where Lord Ram is present, and that the wild forest would be more comfortable for them than the barren city of Ayodhya which the Lord has left. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 85.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 204 it is expressly stated that “the merciful Lord Ram was dearly loved by all the citizens of Ayodhya, whether they were old or young, men or women”.

This point is highlighted here to stress that the celebrations in Ayodhya to mark the marriage of Lord Ram were spontaneous, voluntary and enthusiastically undertaken by the citizens, rather than just to follow the orders of the king, Dasrath, and show loyalty to him as subjects of his kingdom. This is the reason that the festivities and celebrations were so full of colour, life and vibrancy because the people had enthusiastically and voluntarily participated in them.]

भुवन चारि दस भरा उछाहू । जनकसुता रघुबीर बिआहू ॥ ३ ॥

bhuvana cāri dasa bharā uchāhū. janakasutā raghubīra bi'āhū. 3.

As the auspicious good news spread far and wide about the forthcoming marriage of Raghubir (i.e. the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram) with the daughter of king Janak (i.e. with Sita), all the fourteen divisions of the world (known as the “14 Bhuvans”)¹ were filled with festivities and there was celebration everywhere. (3)

[Note—¹The 14 Bhuvans—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, note appended to Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261.

The heavenly world as well as the nether world is included in the term “14 Bhuvans”, and this obviously means that the gods and the inhabitants of the other side of the heaven, the nether world, too had joined in the celebrations that were taking place in Ayodhya which was located on earth.

Refer a similar observation in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

सुनि सुभ कथा लोग अनुरागे । मग गृह गलीं सँवारन लागे ॥ ४ ॥

जद्यपि अवध सदैव सुहावनि । राम पुरी मंगलमय पावनि ॥ ५ ॥

तदपि प्रीति कै प्रीति सुहाई । मंगल रचना रची बनाई ॥ ६ ॥

sunī subha kathā lōga anurāgē. maga gr̥ha galīm samvārana lāgē. 4.

jadyapi avadha sadaiva suhāvani. rāma purī maṅgalamaya pāvani. 5.

tadapi prīti kai prīti suhāī. maṅgala racanā racī banāī. 6.

The people were filled with exceptional joy upon hearing the auspicious good news so much so that they affectionately began to decorate and spruce-up their individual homes as well as the streets and lanes of the city enthusiastically¹.

[Does this line mean that the city of Ayodhya not properly kept and cleaned earlier in a routine manner? No, this is not so as would be clear in the next line.] (4)

Though the city of Ayodhya (known colloquially as “Avadh”) was always very pleasant and fine to behold because it was the eternally divine, holy and sacred city (abode) of Lord Ram (who was a personified form of the Supreme Being)² [5], yet it was especially decked up and colourfully adorned with special auspicious signs to depict in visible form the dimension of the extensive love and affection that the people had for their beloved Lord, Sri Ram [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹Good news may have been coming to Ayodhya on a regular basis because Dasrath was a noble and righteous Emperor in whose empire there was a perpetual atmosphere of all-round prosperity and well-being. But this was a different occasion—because a prince was getting married, and this marriage was not an ordinary one as it had simultaneously established the prince’s glory and fame throughout the world because it was made possible after success in a great feat that entailed the breaking of a formidable bow of Lord Shiva which none of the mighty kings and princes of that time could as much as move an inch. So this achievement gave the citizens a special reason to celebrate—as their beloved prince, Lord Ram, had been declared the winner in an open world-wide competition (like the modern-day Olympics) where even the strongest warriors in the whole world at that time had bitten the dust.

The festivities were all the more colourful and vibrant and undertaken with vigorous enthusiasm because the participants, the citizens of Ayodhya, loved Lord Ram from the deepest corners of their hearts. Refer note of Chaupai line no. 2 above that precedes this present verse.

²Ayodhya was deemed to be eternally divine, holy and sacred because it was here that the Supreme Lord of creation, Lord Vishnu, had decided to live when he took a human form as Lord Ram. For all practical purposes, the terrestrial city of Ayodhya had become a ‘Vaikuntha’, the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu, for the time when Lord Ram lived here.

But the special decorations and celebrations underway in Ayodhya were a gracious gesture undertaken by the beloved devotees of the Lord, the citizens of Ayodhya in this case, to express, in an affectionate and practical manner, their strong bond of love, dedication and devotion for their loving Lord, Sri Ram.]

ध्वज पताक पट चामर चारू । छावा परम बिचित्र बजारू ॥ ७ ॥

कनक कलस तोरन मनि जाला । हरद दूब दधि अच्छत माला ॥ ८ ॥

dhvaja patāka paṭa cāmara cārū. chāvā parama bicitra bajārū. 7.

kanaka kalasa tōrana mani jālā. harada dūba dadhi acchata mālā. 8.

[Now we shall read how the city was decorated.]

Beautiful flags, banners, hangings, festoons, curtains and canopies of various designs and shapes were put up throughout the city and its market-places in a very fascinating and tasteful manner. (7)

Golden vases, festive arches, festoons and hangings with intricate nets interlaced with a wide variety of gems and precious stones along with the use of green grass, curd, unbroken grains of rice and garlands or wreaths of flowers were used to colourfully deck-up the city. (8)

[Note—The golden vases and pots, festoons and hangings, and the garlands and wreaths were used not only to decorate public places but also for the individual households. The green grass, curd, unbroken rice grains and garlands are used during any kind of auspicious activity and religious ceremonies. In effect it means that religious functions were held both publicly as well as privately.]

Earlier we have already read how the city of Janakpur was magnificently decorated when Lord Ram had broken the bow and married Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 289.

Meanwhile, the present Chaupai line no. 8 that we are currently reading can be linked to Doha no. 296 herein below as well to complete the picture of celebrations that assumed the dimensions of a religious event.]

दो०. मंगलमय निज निज भवन लोगन्ह रचे बनाइ ।
बीथीं सींचीं चतुरसम चौकें चारु पुराइ ॥ २९६ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgalamaya nija nija bhavana lōganha racē banā'i.
bīthīr̥ sīncīr̥ caturasama caukēṁ cāru purā'i. 296.

The people made their homes an abode of auspiciousness and celebrations even as the city as a whole was cleaned and liberally sprinkled with scented water in all its four directions (i.e. everywhere, in its northern, southern, eastern and western corners), and then ceremonial squares were designed (painted) on the ground at public places using colourful paste(s) made up of grounded sandalwood, saffron, musk and camphor. (Doha no. 296)

[Note—As has been observed in the note of verse no. 8 above, the auspicious things mentioned therein were used to decorate individual homes as well as public squares.]

First the city was scrubbed clean and washed with scented water. Then colourful pastes made of individual items such as sandalwood, saffron, musk and camphor or a mixture of these things were used paint designs of ceremonial squares on the ground at various locations in the city. These painted squares were then decorated by the items mentioned in verse no. 8 that precedes this Doha, i.e. golden pots, festoons, hangings, wreaths, garlands, green grass, curd, and unbroken rice grains.

Taken all in all, the whole city took an image of a grand arena where some huge auspicious ceremony was being performed. Everyone participated as if it was his personal celebration.]

चौ०. जहँ तहँ जूथ जूथ मिलि भामिनि । सजि नव सप्त सकल दुति दामिनि ॥ १ ॥

caupā'i.

jaham̐ taham̐ jūtha jūtha mili bhāmini. saji nava sapta sakala duti dāmini. 1.

Groups of beautiful ladies collected here and there, everywhere, in the city¹. They were well adorned by all the sixteen legendary adornments that noble ladies are supposed to sport (that make them respectable in a society)², and this made their presence as brilliant and outstanding as the dazzle of lightening.

[That is, when the women-folk of the city stepped outside of their homes to gather together in different groups at various places, they looked wonderful and well groomed. All of them had properly cleaned and dressed themselves before they stepped out of their homes; all of them looked dignified and noble. They were decorated in their best finery with an adorned body wearing a young and fresh look; they sported new colourful clothes, beautiful ornaments, wreaths of flowers on their heads, coloured lips and glowing body. They were all very jubilant, bubbling over with youthful energy and enthusiasm. That is why their presence has been compared to the dazzle of lightening as they assembled in cheerful groups on the streets of the city of Ayodhya.] (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286 that describes a similar scene at Janakpur when large groups of women-folk had joined hands to sing auspicious and laudatory songs to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 318.

According to ancient poetic tradition of India, the sixteen adornments with which a noble lady is supposed to adorn herself to get respect in the society are basically related to practicing principles of personal hygiene and grooming that would make her physical presence appealing and pleasant for others. She is expected to practice these sixteen steps in her daily life; they make her look naturally attractive and subtly beautiful.

These “sixteen adornments” of a woman are the following—(1) Rubbing and cleaning the body with a scented water to which herbs that refresh the skin are added (dissolved); (2) Ablution or taking a daily bath to clean the body thoroughly; (3) Changing clothes daily and dressing herself afresh with properly cleaned garments; (4) Applying a red-coloured ointment made from lac on the sides of the sole of the two feet; (5) Combing and properly pleating the hair on the head; (6) Applying ‘Sindoor’ or red vermilion powder on the head along the vertical line marking the partition of the hairs on either side of the skull, starting from the middle point of the hairline above the root of the nose and going upto the point on the top of the skull (the cranium); (7) Applying a thin paste of sandalwood on the forehead; (8) Making a dot on the tip of the chin with some pigment; (9) Colouring the palms of the hand and soles and sides of the feet with a paste made from the leaves of the Mehadi plant (the myrtle plant); (10) Rubbing the body with a light massage of some scented ointment made of various condiments and spices to make the skin glow and look young; (11) Wearing ornaments that look sober on her body, instead of making her look pretentious and ugly; (12) Decorating the hairs with individual flowers or with small wreaths; (13) Keeping the mouth clean and refreshed by using mouth-freshners such as by chewing condiments and spices alone or by stuffing them in leaves of the betel plant; (14) Colouring the lips by chewing leaves of the betel plant stuffed with spices, instead of using artificial pigments; (15) Either keeping the teeth sparkling white by proper care, or if that is not feasible due to any reason then at least applying some colouring to the teeth to camouflage stains; and finally (16) Applying ‘Kaaajal’ or collyrium on the edges of the eyelids.

Earlier on in this epic story of the Ram Charit Manas we have read that when Lord Ram was born, there was mass celebration in Ayodhya. At that time also the ladies of the city had formed big and small groups, and had decorated themselves in their best finery. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 194.]

बिधुबदनीं मृग सावक लोचनि । निज सरूप रति मानु बिमोचनि ॥ २ ॥

bidhubadanīm mṛga sāvaka lōcani. nija sarūpa rati mānu bimōcani. 2.

These women-folk had beautiful faces like that of the moon, and had eyes resembling that of the fawn¹. They were literally putting to shame the beauty of Rati, the consort of Kamdeo, the patron god of passion and love, who is traditionally regarded as the most beautiful entity in creation. (2)

[Note—¹It is a standard practice in ancient literature to compare the beauty of the face with the moon, and that of the eye with the eyes of a fawn.

An exactly similar comparison is made later on in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 318 when ladies of Janakpur had come out in hordes to offer Arti (ceremonial showing of lighted lamps to an honourable guest) to Lord Ram who arrived as the palace gates of Sita as a bridegroom.

Even Lord Ram has invoked the moon when he was praising the beauty of Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237.]

गावहिं मंगल मंजुल बानीं । सुनि कल रव कलकंठि लजानीं ॥ ३ ॥

gāvahiṁ maṅgala maṅjula bānīm. suni kala rava kalakaṇṭhi lajānīm. 3.

These groups of beautiful women-folk sang equally beautiful and auspicious songs with a sweet voice and melodious tunes that were so wonderful and pleasing to hear that they put to shame the voice of the female cuckoo that is famed for its sweetness and charm. (3)

[Note—The voice of the cuckoo is so pleasing to hear that it is traditionally used as a bench-mark to determine the sweetness of the spoken word, whether it is a song and its tune, or a general talk.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 318, and (iii) Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 322 that describe a similar scene at Janakpur when large groups of women-folk had joined hands to sing auspicious and laudatory songs to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.]

भूप भवन किमि जाइ बखाना । बिस्व बिमोहन रचेउ बिताना ॥ ४ ॥

bhūpa bhavana kimi jā'i bakhānā. bisva bimōhana racē'u bitānā. 4.

How can one describe the beauty and glory of the royal palace¹ where a fabulous pavilion had been erected that attracted the attention of the whole world by its magnificence and grandeur²? (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 345 that also says that the palace of king Dasrath looked fabulous at the time of arrival of the marriage party from Janakpur with the four grooms and their brides.

Further, in Doha no. 213 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 the magnificence of king Janak's palace is narrated.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 289 where a 'pavilion' that was erected in Janakpur has been described in detail.

Now the question arises—why is the pavilion at Janakpur described in such fine detail whereas the one at Ayodhya is just briefly referred to in a single line? The answer is that the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita would be formalized under the pavilion at Janakpur and hence its glory and significance cannot be matched by any other pavilion. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 289 which is explicit on this point.]

मंगल द्रव्य मनोहर नाना । राजत बाजत बिपुल निसाना ॥ ५ ॥

maṅgala drabya manōhara nānā. rājata bājata bipula nisānā. 5.

Countless articles that are used during auspicious occasions and which portend good omen¹ were arranged at different locations in the pavilion, the palace, as well as all over in the city. Meanwhile, numerous kettle-drums and other musical instruments were played loudly and enthusiastically in the city². (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 288 and its accompanying note which refer to the different auspicious things that are used during such celebrations.

²Refer Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296 herein above which also talks about the playing of the kettle-drums. But at that time the good and auspicious news of Lord Ram's and his younger brother Laxman's welfare as well as the Lord's marriage had just begun to spread in the city, so the drums were sounded in those parts of the city where this initial round of news arrived. By and by the news had spread to all the corners of the huge city, and therefore at the point of time this present verse refers to there was a clamour of countless kettle-drums and other sorts of musical instruments being played throughout the length and breadth of the extended areas of the city, its different districts and boroughs, and individual households and community centers.]

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286 where it is described that as soon as Lord Ram broke the bow there was a loud clamour of kettle-drums in the city of Janakpur.]

कतहुँ बिरिद बंदी उच्चरहीं । कतहुँ बेद धुनि भूसुर करहीं ॥ ६ ॥

katahum' birida bandī uccarahīm. katahum' bēda dhuni bhūsura karahīm. 6.

At some of the places the royal bards and minstrels were singing the glories of the royal dynasty, and at other places the Brahmins were chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas. (6)

[Note—A similar situation prevailed in Ayodhya at the time of the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 262, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 where it is narrated that the bards and the minstrels sang the

glories of king Janak along with that of Lord Ram, and the Brahmins chanted sacred hymns.

It was customary for Brahmins to chant sacred hymns of auspicious occasions as will be evident later on in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 where we shall read that the Brahmins uttered hymns from the scriptures from time to time when the suitable occasion arose.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323, and Doha no. 324 in this context of Brahmins chanting hymns from the Vedas.]

गावहिं सुंदरि मंगल गीता । लै लै नामु रामु अरु सीता ॥ ७ ॥

gāvahim sundari maṅgala gītā. lai lai nāmu rāmu aru sītā. 7.

They (i.e. the women-folk referred to in verse no. 3, and the bards and minstrels mentioned in verse no. 6) sang beautiful and auspicious songs befitting this celebratory occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita by lacing their verses repeatedly with the individual names of the groom and the bride, i.e. Lord Ram and Sita respectively.

[In other words, the auspicious songs that they sang were tailored to suit the happy occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. To make the marriage-songs specific to the occasion that marked the celebrations that accompanied the royal marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the names of the groom and the bride were incorporated in the lyrics of the songs themselves. The effect was that though the songs had been composed by song-writers and poets in a general way, the inclusion of the name of Lord Ram and Sita as part of the lyrics made the songs sound as if they were written specifically for this auspicious occasion.] (7)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that the ladies as well as the bards have put the name of Lord Ram before that of Sita. There are two reasons for it—(i) The first reason is that they are citizens of Ayodhya which was the capital of Lord Ram and not of Sita, and hence the citizens decided to afford the Lord precedence over Sita to show their loyalty for the royal family of king Dasrath. (ii) The second reason is that the glory of Sita was based on the glory of her spouse, Lord Ram. The king always gets preference over the queen. Even in the cosmic context, Lord Vishnu gets precedence, is more revered, and occupies a senior position as compared to his consort goddess Laxmi.]

बहुत उछाहु भवनु अति थोरा । मानहुँ उमगि चला चहु ओरा ॥ ८ ॥

bahuta uchāhu bhavanu ati thōrā. mānahum'umagi calā cahu ōrā. 8.

The abundance of joy and happiness was of such a huge dimension that the palace of the king and all the households of the city taken together were not sufficient to contain it as it seemed to heave and surge in every direction and overflowed everywhere. (8)

[Note—The city of Ayodhya was eternally full of joy and happiness because of the simple fact that the Supreme Lord of creation had taken birth there in a human form as Lord Ram. In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195, and more specifically to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296 which explicitly asserts this point.

This present verse no. 8 means that there was so much joy and ecstasy in Ayodhya that it spilled over onto the streets of the city in as much as the people danced and sang in merry abundance not only within their own homes and community centers but even in open public places like gardens, intersections of main avenues, stadiums, streets, lanes, by-lanes and market-places.]

दो०. सोभा दसरथ भवन कइ को कबि बरनै पार ।
जहाँ सकल सुर सीस मनि राम लीन्ह अवतार ॥ २९७ ॥

dōhā.

sōbhā dasaratha bhavana ka'i kō kabi baranai pāra.
jahām̐ sakala sura sīsa mani rāma līnha avatāra. 297.

Say, which poet can be skilled enough to describe the glory, the greatness and the grandeur of the palace of king Dasrath where the Lord of the gods has incarnated himself in the form of Lord Ram? [In other words, it is impossible to describe the glory of the household of king Dasrath where the Supreme Lord has decided to live in the human form of Lord Ram.] (Doha no. 297)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195 that says “even the goddess of speech known as Saraswati, and the thousand-tongued celestial serpent known as Seshnath, cannot narrate the abundance of glory and happiness of the time when Lord Ram had taken birth in the household of Dasrath”.]

चौ०. भूप भरत पुनि लिए बोलाई । हय गय स्यंदन साजहु जाई ॥ १ ॥
चलहु बेगि रघुबीर बराता । सुनत पुलक पूरे दोउ भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa bharata puni li'ē bōlāī. haya gaya syandana sājahu jāī. 1.
calahu bēgi raghubīra barātā. sunata pulaka pūrē dō'u bhrātā. 2.

The king then called Bharat and instructed him as follows—‘Go and get the elephants, the horses and the chariots decorated and readied. (1)

Be quick to make proper preparations for the departure of the marriage part of Lord Ram as soon as possible.’

Hearing these instructions (of their father), the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) became thrilled in their bodies. (2)

[Note—Prior to this verse we have read how celebrations were being undertaken in Ayodhya. Now, the king called his sons Bharat and Shatrughan, the younger brothers of Lord Ram, and instructed them to make preparations for the departure of a grand marriage party for Janakpur. This party should match the greatness of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and hence a large number of elephants, horses and chariots were to be decorated and got readied.

This news naturally made the two brothers excited.]

भरत सकल साहनी बोलाए । आयसु दीन्ह मुदित उठि धाए ॥ ३ ॥
 रुचि रुचि जीन तुरग तिन्ह साजे । बरन बरन बर बाजि बिराजे ॥ ४ ॥
 सुभग सकल सुठि चंचल करनी । अय इव जरत धरत पग धरनी ॥ ५ ॥
 नाना जाति न जाहिं बखाने । निदरि पवनु जनु चहत उड़ाने ॥ ६ ॥

bharata sakala sāhanī bōlā'ē. āyasu dīnha mudita uṭhi dhā'ē. 3.
 raci ruci jīna turaga tinha sājē. barana barana bara bāji birājē. 4.
 subhaga sakala suṭhi cañcala karanī. aya iva jarata dharata paga dharanī. 5.
 nānā jāti na jāhiṁ bakhānē. nidari pavanu janu cahata uṛānē. 6.

On his part, Bharat summoned the chief officers in charge of royal stables and issued necessary instructions. These officers were exceedingly delighted to hear these instructions and immediately got up cheerfully to implement them. (3)

The stable incharges decorated numerous breeds of wonderful horses with colourful saddles and magnificent bridles, and collected these majestic horses at a place where all other components of the marriage party (procession) were to assemble. (4)

All these horses were wonderful to behold and dynamic in their movements. They were so swift that when they galloped it appeared as if they foot didn't touch the ground because the latter was like hot iron. [When these horses ran, their hooves touched and left the ground so rapidly in quick succession that it appeared to an observer that the animal is feeling scorched by touching a hot surface and so it wishes not to make any contact with it, and is thus trying to fly in the air.] (5)

These steeds and stallions belonged to so many different breeds that it is not possible to list or describe them. Their strides were so swift that they appeared to fly in the air when they galloped. (6)

[Note—There were countless steeds and stallions of different breeds in the royal stables. Some were war-horses, others used for games and ceremonial occasions, and some others for the purposes of making gifts. The stable-hands decorated the horses colourfully, using saddles, bridles and reins of different colours and design that would best fit with the type of the animal.

Some of these horses were brought in from the royal stables and others from the royal stud-farms. The following verses shall qualify these horses further.]

तिन्ह सब छयल भए असवारा । भरत सरिस बय राजकुमारा ॥ ७ ॥
 सब सुंदर सब भूषनधारी । कर सर चाप तून कटि भारी ॥ ८ ॥

tinha saba chayala bha'ē asavārā. bharata sarisa baya rājakumārā. 7.
 saba sundara saba bhūṣanadhārī. kara sara cāpa tūna kaṭi bhārī. 8.

Gallant princes, knights, grandees, nobles and other sundry members of the royalty in the kingdom¹, who were roughly of the same age as Bharat, mounted these fully decorated horses. (7)

All of them were handsome to look at. They were fully decorated with the best of ornaments, held a bow and an arrow in their hands, and had quivers tied to their waists. (8)

[Note—¹The “princes” referred to here may have been members of the extended royal family of king Dasrath, sons of other senior courtiers such as ministers and chiefs of the various wings of the army, as well as princes of nearby kingdoms who were friends of Bharat and Lord Ram. As soon as the news spread that Lord Ram is to be married and a grand party is preparing to leave for the bride’s place, all such princes and members of the royalty may have rushed to join the marriage party so that they can join it to attend the marriage ceremony.]

Even in today’s time when the news spreads that the groom’s party is to leave for the bride’s place from a certain spot, all the friends of the groom assemble there and board the transport arranged by the groom’s family to ferry them to the venue of the marriage ceremony. In this particular instance however, the method of transport was the horses, the elephants and the chariots.]

दो०. छरे छबीले छयल सब सूर सुजान नबीन ।
जुग पदचर असवार प्रति जे असिकला प्रबीन ॥ २९८ ॥

dōhā.

charē chabīlē chayala saba sūra sujāna nabīna.
juga padacara asavāra prati jē asikalā prabīna. 298.

All these princes, knights, grandees, nobles and other members of the royalty who had mounted the horses were not only handsome and magnificent to look at in all their fine attire and other royal ensembles and paraphernalia, but were also maverick, brave and gallant warriors in their own right. [They looked wonderful and well heeled; their external appearances gave the impression that they since they lead a pampered life of comfort and pleasure they won’t be able to stand against their enemies in the battle-field, but this was a wrong assumption as all of them were trained warriors known for their gallantry and valour.]

Each one of them was accompanied or attended by two foot-men (foot-soldiers) who held swords in their hands and were experts in wielding this weapon. (Doha no. 298)

[Note—Each horse-rider was attended by two helpers, one on each side. They were necessary to control the horses should the animals get distracted and go out of control due to the huge crowd and cacophony of musical instruments.]

Besides this point, the riders needed their help to mount and alight from the horses—because one of the attendants would hold the horse and the other would assist his master to get down from the horse or mount it.

The third reason is that it was a matter of status for the princes and knights who were accustomed to being attended by servants at all times.]

चौ०. बाँधें बिरद बीर रन गाढ़े । निकसि भए पुर बाहेर ठाढ़े ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

bām̐dhēm birada bīra rana gārḥē. nikasi bha'e pura bāhēra ṭhārḥē. 1.

[The following verses would describe the marriage party of Lord Ram as it assembled outside Ayodhya in preparation for the departure of the procession for Janakpur.]

Brave and gallant warriors who prided themselves for their adherence to the vows of chivalry as well as for their bravery, gallantry and valour, had enthusiastically came out of the city and gathered together at a spot, readying themselves for departure. (1)

[Note—Remember: We are dealing with events of ancient times when chivalry and gallantry were honourable traits expected from the warrior class known as the 'Kshatriyas' to which the royal family of Dasrath belonged.

Royal showmanship, regal demeanours, pomp and pageantry were the norms of the day for courts of kings and emperors.]

फेरहिं चतुर तुरग गति नाना । हरषहिं सुनि सुनि पनव निसाना ॥ २ ॥

phērahiṁ catura turaga gati nānā. haraṣahiṁ suni suni panava nisānā. 2.

Expert horse-riders and cavalymen put their horses through different steps and made them display various maneuvers (such as making the horses dance and prance in various ways) to exhibit their skills in handling the horses. They feel exhilarated and excited upon hearing the vigorous sound of the beating of the drums and kettle-drums. (2)

[Note—These expert horsemen made their horses dance and prance to the rhythmic beat of the musical drums. The more vigorous the sound of the musical instruments the more enthusiastically they prodded the animals to dance and prance energetically.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 302 which also allude to the dancing of the horses to the beat of musical instruments.]

रथ सारथिन्ह बिचित्र बनाए । ध्वज पताक मनि भूषन लाए ॥ ३ ॥

ratha sārathinha bicitra banā'ē. dhvaja patāka mani bhūṣana lā'ē. 3.

Meanwhile, the charioteers had fabulously decorated the numerous chariots with flags, banners, curtains, gems and other ornamentations which they had brought especially for this occasion. (3)

[Note—A king's army had the horse brigade on the foreground, which was followed by foot soldiers and the chariots, with the elephants on either flanks.

So, first the cavalry was described, and in this verse the chariots are being described.]

चवँर चारु किंकिनि धुनि करहीं । भानु जान सोभा अपहरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

cavam̐ra cāru kiṁkini dhuni karahīṁ. bhānu jāna sōbhā apaharahīṁ. 4.

These chariots had beautiful canopies (under which the royal passenger would be seated) and were provided by elegant whisks (to fan them). The chariots were adorned with small tinkling bells (which made a pleasant sound resembling some musical instrument as the vehicle moved along).

The chariots were so gorgeous and opulent that they virtually stole (or put to shame; brushed aside; overrode; surpassed and eclipsed; made to pale into insignificance) the splendour and grandeur of the chariot of the Sun-God. (4)

[Note—The young members of the royalty such as princes and brave knights would mount the horses, while the elders and other noble men would sit in these chariots.]

सावँकरन अगनित हय होते । ते तिन्ह रथन्ह सारथिन्ह जोते ॥ ५ ॥
सुंदर सकल अलंकृत सोहे । जिन्हहि बिलोकत मुनि मन मोहे ॥ ६ ॥

sāvam̐karana aganita haya hōtē. tē tinha rathanha sārathinha jōtē. 5.
sundara sakala alaṅkṛta sōhē. jinhahi bilōkata muni mana mōhē. 6.

Numerous horses of a special breed that had dark ears¹, which were generally regarded as auspicious as they were used during horse-sacrifices, were yoked to the chariots. (5)

All these horses were magnificent to behold because they were beautifully decorated with a wide variety of ornamentations. They were so wonderful to behold that even sages and hermits became enchanted by their sight (though they are supposed to be immune to such worldly physical attractions). (6)

[Note—¹These horses normally had milk-white skin and long dark ears. They were used exclusively for fire sacrifices and other religious events.]

जे जल चलहिं थलहि की नाई । टाप न बूड़ बेग अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥

jē jala calahim̐ thalahi kī nā'īm̐. ṭāpa na būṛa bēga adhikā'īm̐. 7.

The swiftness and dynamism of these horses was so outstanding that when they moved on water (such as when crossing streams and rivulets) their foot touched the surface of the water as rapidly as they touched the ground when they galloped on dry land. They seemed to skim the surface of the water because they cantered away so fast that their hooves didn't seem to touch it. (7)

[Note—It ought to be noted that a lot of stress has been laid on the quality of the horses in these verses because mighty armies of those times were measured in their strength by the strength and ability of their cavalry wings.]

अइ सइ सबु साजु बनाई । रथी सारथिन्ह लिए बोलाई ॥ ८ ॥

astra sastra sabu sāju banā'ī. rathī sārathinha li'ē bōlā'ī. 8.

Meanwhile, the charioteers had armed their vehicles with different kinds of weapons and armaments, and having finished their jobs they invited their masters to board them. (8)

[Note—The natural query that comes to the mind is that this was supposed to be a “marriage procession” and not an army going to war. But it must be remembered that it was a party of a great king-emperor, and it had to match his stature. Wherever a king went he was always accompanied by a well-armed and equipped army. This was done to ensure that he is given due respect befitting his royal status wherever he goes, and also to provide for his security in case of an unexpected ambush.

After all, an Emperor can’t be expected to arrive at the place where his son, the would-be emperor, is about to be married, astride on an ordinary chariot and accompanied by a mere handful of soldiers and servants. That would be a hilarious situation.]

दो०. चढ़ि चढ़ि रथ बाहेर नगर लागीं जुरन बरात ।
होत सगुन सुंदर सबहि जो जेहि कारज जात ॥ २९९ ॥

dōhā.

caḍhi caḍhi ratha bāhēra nagara lāgī jurana barāta.
hōta saguna sundara sabahi jō jēhi kāraja jāta. 299.

The members of the marriage procession mounted the chariots and started collecting outside the city.

In the city itself, wherever anyone went to do any odd job, he would encounter auspicious omens. [In other words, the general atmosphere in the city of Ayodhya was one of auspiciousness, exuberance, vibrancy, joyfulness, delightfulness, cheer, festivities and celebrations.] (Doha no. 299)

चौ०. कलित करिबरन्हि परीं अँबारीं । कहि न जाहिं जेहि भाँति सँवारीं ॥ १ ॥
चले मत गज घंट बिराजी । मनहुँ सुभग सावन घन राजी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kalita karibaranhi parīm ambārīm. kahi na jāhiṁ jēhi bhāmṭi samvārīm. 1.
calē matta gaja ghaṇṭa birājī. manahum̐ subhaga sāvana ghana rājī. 2.

[After describing the horses, it is now the turn of the elephants.]

On the back of magnificent elephants of the best breeds were put elegant seats that had canopies and other accoutrements that made them look so regal and splendid that it is not possible to describe their beauty and elegance in words.

[On these seats would be seated the chiefs of the various wings of the king’s own army as well as those of the knights who were accompanying the marriage procession.]

(1)

These young elephants that were charged with dynamic energy and in a state of rut, who had been well decorated with chiming bells (and other decorative paraphernalia such as garlands of pearls, banners with the royal emblem, bracelets of gold studded with

gems that were tied around their legs, and so on and so forth), moved ahead majestically in a procession as if huge banks of rumbling and thundering dark clouds start ascending the horizon during the rainy season. (2)

[Note—There were two types of elephants in the royal procession—one that were used in ceremonial processions or other auspicious occasions, and others that were used as war-elephants. They represented the might, majesty and dignity of the king's huge army. Elephants and horses, as well as the chariots, were the main components of a king's army in those days.

It should be noted that the procession had the horses in the vanguard, behind them followed the chariots, and then came the elephants. They were mounted by warriors, princes and knights. This was the pattern followed by the royal army in ancient days.

Behind this army came the civilian component of the marriage procession consisting of the Brahmins, royal bards, minstrels, genealogists, servants and other attendants, as well as mules, oxen, camels etc. that were used to carry ration and other innumerable things of daily use that were needed to support such a huge assembly of people and animals.]

बाहन अपर अनेक बिधाना । सिबिका सुभग सुखासन जाना ॥ ३ ॥
तिन्ह चढ़ि चले बिप्रबर बृन्दा । जनु तनु धरें सकल श्रुति छंदा ॥ ४ ॥

bāhana apara anēka bidhānā. sibikā subhaga sukhāsana jānā. 3.
tinha caḍhi calē biprabara bṛndā. janu tanu dharēm sakala śruti chandā. 4.

Besides the horses, the chariots and the elephants there were various kinds of other means of conveyance such as grand palanquins, elegant sedans, and other such seats that were all elaborately decorated in an elegant style. They were all very comfortable to sit upon. (3)

On these vehicles were seated the Brahmins, who were like personified forms of the verses of the Vedas¹, as they joined the other members of the marriage party. (4)

[Note—¹This is a metaphor to indicate two things—one, the Brahmins were revered men just like the scriptures known as the 'Vedas', and two, that they were in their thousands just like the countless numbers of the verses of the Vedas.]

मागध सूत बंदि गुनगायक । चले जान चढ़ि जो जेहि लायक ॥ ५ ॥

māgadha sūta bandi gunagāyaka. calē jāna caḍhi jō jēhi lāyaka. 5.

The royal bards, heralds, minstrels and genealogists boarded different kinds of vehicles that were suited to their position in the social and royal hierarchy of the kingdom as they followed from behind the Brahmins. (5)

बेसर ऊँट बृषभ बहु जाती । चले बस्तु भरि अगनित भाँती ॥ ६ ॥

bēsara ūm̐ ṭa bṛṣabha bahu jāṭī. calē bastu bhari aganita bhām̐ṭī. 6.

They were followed by animals such as mules, camels and oxen of various breeds that carried on their backs a huge supply of essential commodities of different kinds (that would be needed to sustain such a large party of men and animals for a long time). (6)

कोटिन्ह काँवरि चले कहारा । बिबिध बस्तु को बरनै पारा ॥ ७ ॥

kōṭinha kām̐vari calē kahārā. bibidha bastu kō baranai pārā. 7.

Behind these animals carting essential commodities came their keepers, as well as the porters and other bearers of goods of such a wide variety that no one can narrate or list them. (7)

[Note—The animals mentioned in verse no. 6 were employed to carry heavier items such as ration and other raw materials needed for daily usage for the huge army and party of men, while the porters and bearers were employed to ferry other lighter things such as clothes, gifts, robes, ornaments, decorations, insignia and other royal paraphernalia that needed to be handled carefully by men.]

चले सकल सेवक समुदाई । निज निज साजु समाजु बनाई ॥ ८ ॥

calē sakala sēvaka samudā'ī. nija nija sāju samāju banā'ī. 8.

All the servants, servitors and attendants formed a huge crowd as they followed from behind in the form of large groups. (8)

[Note—Amongst the servants, servitors and attendants there was a hierarchy, and each rung of this hierarchy had numerous members. So when they joined the marriage procession, they formed their own groups. And therefore, there must have been a large number of groups of servants, servitors and attendants of different status and designation that formed a huge crowd which followed from behind in the royal procession.]

दो०. सब केँ उर निर्भर हरषु पूरित पुलक सरीर ।

कबहिं देखिबे नयन भरि रामु लखनु दोउ बीर ॥ ३०० ॥

dōhā.

saba kēm ura nirbhara haraṣu pūrita pulaka sarīra.

kabahiṁ dēkhibē nayana bhari rāmu lakhanu dō'u bīra. 300.

The hearts of all of them were bubbling over with excitement and their bodies were full of thrill, wondering when they will have the earliest chance to see to their eyes full the two brave warriors, Lord Ram and Laxman (who were very dear to them all). (Doha no. 300)

[Note—The citizens loved their princes from the depth of their hearts. Lord Ram had a special place in the heart of all men and women. This fact is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 204.]

This will also be abundantly evident later on when we read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83, as well as in Doha no. 83 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that describe how the citizens were overwhelmed with profound sorrow and grief upon learning that Lord Ram was going to the forest to live in exile, and had decided at the time that they can't live without the Lord. So they all followed him from behind in a huge mass of lamenting men and women who refused to stay back at Ayodhya as they were determined to follow the Lord wherever he went.

Not only the humans, but even the animals of Ayodhya had loved their lord dearly as would be evident when we read Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 83 which describes how the elephants, the horses, the cattle and other four-footed animals, as well as the birds represented by the sparrow hawk, peacock, cuckoo, parrot, ruddy goose, crane, swan and partridge were submerged in grief at the time Lord Ram left Ayodhya for his forest exile.

Again we read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 that when Lord Ram sent Sumantra, the chief minister of the kingdom of Ayodhya who was sent by king Dasrath with a chariot to try and bring the Lord back after some initial days in the forest, back, the horses of the chariot became exceedingly sorrowful and neighed soulfully as they repeatedly looked back to glance at their beloved Lord whom they were forced to leave behind when Sumantra turned the chariot round and forced them to move on in the direction of Ayodhya.

Well so, therefore, it is the same natural and unbound affection and love that the citizens as well as the animals had for their beloved Lord Ram that had made them so thrilled and highly exhilarated when they joined the marriage procession of the Lord. They are very eager to have a glimpse of their beloved Lord Ram as soon as possible, and they are so impatient because they hadn't seen the Lord for quite some time, ever since he had gone with sage Vishwamitra to protect the latter's fire sacrifice.

If it was allowed and possible, they would have literally run or flown, as it were, to Janakpur to be with Lord Ram in the shortest possible time.]

चौ०. गरजहिं गज घंटा धुनि घोरा । रथ रव बाजि हिंस चहु ओरा ॥ १ ॥
निदरि घनहि घुर्जरहिं निसाना । निज पराड़ कछु सुनिअ न काना ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

garajahim gaja ghaṇṭā dhuni ghōrā. ratha rava bāji himsa cahu ōrā. 1.
nidari ghanahi ghurmmarahim nisānā. nija parā'i kachu suni'a na kānā. 2.

There was a thunderous din that was caused by the trumpeting of elephants, the clanging of bells, the creaking sound of the wheels of chariots, and the neighing of horses in all the directions. (1)

To this cacophony was added the deafening sound of the vigorous beating of the kettle-drums that resembled the clap of thunder during the rainy season.

The combined effect of this loud din and clamour was that no one could hear anything, what others said or his own voice¹. (2)

[Note—There was an electrifying excitement that pervaded at the place outside the gates of the city of Ayodhya where the marriage part had started assembling. There were animals as well as humans, and everyone was terribly happy.

¹There are other places also in Ram Charit Manas where it is said that the clamour of the musical instruments etc. was so loud that the resultant din made it impossible for one to hear what others were speaking. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

महा भीर भूपति के द्वारें । रज होइ जाइ पषान पबारें ॥ ३ ॥

mahā bhīra bhūpati kē dvārēm. raja hō'i jā'i paṣāna pabārēm. 3.

[The previous verses had described the scene where the marriage party had assembled on the outskirts of the city. Now in the following verses, the scene within the city is being narrated.]

There was a huge crowd at the gates of the royal palace. The crowd was so thick and excited that if a stone were to be thrown on the ground at that place then it would be crushed to dust by the pressure of the feet of those who had gathered there. (3)

[Note—The palace grounds were chock-a-block with a sea of citizens. Everyone wished to witness first hand the goings-on of that happy occasion.]

चढ़ी अटारिन्ह देखहिं नारीं । लिएँ आरती मंगल थारीं ॥ ४ ॥

गावहिं गीत मनोहर नाना । अति आनंदु न जाइ बखाना ॥ ५ ॥

caṛhī aṭārinha dēkhahim nārīm. li'ēm' āratī maṅgala thārīm. 4.
gāvahim gīta manōhara nānā. ati ānandu na jā'i bakhānā. 5.

The women-folk of the city went to the balconies and terraces of their homes to watch the exuberant celebrations below. They carried platters with auspicious items to perform the ritual of 'doing of the Arti' (showing of lighted earthen lamps) when the king and his family members would move out of the palace and proceed towards the spot where the rest of the marriage party had assembled on the outskirts. (4)

These women-folk were singing pleasantly different kinds of songs that were both melodious as well as auspicious in their content. They were overjoyed, being overwhelmed with emotions of happiness and ecstasy. (5)

[Note—Whereas the men had moved out onto the streets and danced and sang in merry abundance, the women stayed behind as was the tradition of the time. They expressed their joy by singing and doing the Arti. A similar scene would be witnessed in Janakpur when Lord Ram would proceed towards the marriage venue. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 317—to Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318.

Earlier we have already read that when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone on a sight-seeing visit of Janakpur prior to the breaking of the bow, a huge crowd of women-folk of the city had watched them from the balconies and terraces of their homes. They were overwhelmed to see these handsome prince and had invoked their deities and prayed to

them fervently to make it so happen that Sita gets married with Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.]

तब सुमंत्र दुइ स्यंदन साजी । जोते रबि हय निंदक बाजी ॥ ६ ॥

taba sumantra du'i syandana sājī. jōtē rabi haya nindaka bājī. 6.

Then Sumantra, the chief minister of the kingdom, got two fabulous chariots ready. Horses that put to shame the wonderful horses of the celestial chariot of the Sun God, were yoked to these chariots. (6)

[Note—The Sun God's chariot has seven horses. This allusion means that each of the two chariots that Sumantra got readied for king Dasrath and his royal family had at least seven horses, and these horses were handpicked after thorough training and testing. The sort of horses that Dasrath had in his stables can be gauged by reading the previous verses, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 298, and Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 299. If such wonderful horses were used by other princes and knights then one can guess the magnificence of the horses that were kept aside for the personal use of the king-emperor, Dasrath himself.

The brilliance of these horses is stressed by comparing them to the horses of the chariot of the Sun God and saying that there were far better than the latter.]

दोउ रथ रुचिर भूप पहिं आने । नहिं सारद पहिं जाहिं बखाने ॥ ७ ॥

राज समाजु एक रथ साजा । दूसर तेज पुंज अति भ्राजा ॥ ८ ॥

dō'u ratha rucira bhūpa pahim ānē. nahim sārada pahim jāhim bakhānē. 7.
rāja samāju ēka ratha sājā. dūsara tēja punja ati bhrājā. 8.

Two such fabulous chariots were brought before the king (Dasrath). They were so magnificent and brilliant that even the patron goddess of speech and literary expertise, goddess Sarda (Saraswati), was unable to describe their beauty and magnificence. (7)

One of these chariots was bedecked with royal paraphernalia (such as whisks, arms, canopy, royal standard, a throne with its parasol and ceremonial umbrella, etc.), and the other was brilliant in its radiance as if it was a fount of splendour. (8)

[Note—It is easy to guess who will sit in which chariot. The first was occupied by king Dasrath himself, while his royal priest, sage Vasistha, would sit in the second one. It will be clear in Doha no. 301 below.]

दो0. तेहिं रथ रुचिर बसिष्ठ कहूँ हरषि चढ़ाइ नरेसु ।

आपु चढ़ेउ स्यंदन सुमिरि हर गुर गौरि गनेसु ॥ ३०१ ॥

dōhā.

tēhiṁ ratha rucira basiṣṭha kahum̐ haraṣi carhā'i narēsu.
āpu carhē'u syandana sumiri hara gura gauri ganēsu. 301.

Sage Vasistha was made to board this (second) chariot, while the king himself boarded the first one after remembering and invoking Lord Har (Shiva), Guru (his moral preceptor), Gauri (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) and Ganesh (the son of Lord Shiva who provides auspiciousness and success in any endeavour, and is worshipped at the beginning of any exercise). (Doha no. 301)

[Note—It is a standard practice to invoke gods and one's personal deity before one embarks on a journey to ensure success in the objective of the trip as well as to remove any hurdles that may occur due to interference by malevolent stars. When Lord Ram had started on his journey for forest exile he too had prayed to Lords Ganesh and Shiva, and Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati to ensure their welfare and safety in the wilds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Doha no. 79; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81; (iii) Doha no. 85; and (iv) Doha no. 103 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.]

चौ०. सहित बसिष्ठ सोह नृप कैसैं । सुर गुर संग पुरंदर जैसे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sahita basiṣṭha sōha nr̥pa kaisēm̐. sura gura saṅga purandara jaisēm̐. 1.

In the company of his Guru (sage Vasistha), the king (Dasrath) looked as majestic and grand as Indra (the king of gods) looks in the company of the Guru of the gods (known as Brihaspati). (1)

[Note—A king's glory and majesty is enhanced when he is accompanied by his Guru. Both king Dasrath and Guru Vasistha were highly regarded in the world, the former having the rare distinction of being the worldly father of Lord Ram, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and the latter being the Lord's preceptor and teacher, a privilege no one else got. In fact, it was this rare honour to become a Guru of the Lord in his human form that Vasistha, who was the son of the creator Brahma, had accepted to become a priest of the Raghu dynasty when his father, Brahma, explained this privilege to him. This has been specifically stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

Therefore, these two honourable gentlemen, king Dasrath and guru Vasistha, standing side by side, looked as if two suns were shining in their fully splendour simultaneously. In the present verse they have been likened to the Indra, the king of the gods, and Brihaspati, their Guru.]

करि कुल रीति बेद बिधि राऊ । देखि सबहि सब भाँति बनाऊ ॥ २ ॥
सुमिरि रामु गुर आयसु पाई । चले महीपति संख बजाई ॥ ३ ॥

kari kula rīti bēda bidhi rā'ū. dēkhi sabahi saba bhām̐ti banā'ū. 2.
sumiri rāmu gura āyasu pā'ī. calē mahīpati saṅkha bajā'ī. 3.

The king cheerfully and diligently observed all the traditional formalities ordained for such auspicious occasions in the Vedas and other scriptures as well as those that were established by tradition in the royal family.

After having completed these formalities, the king observed that everything was ready and all arrangements were in place for the grand departure of the marriage procession for Janakpur. (2)

So, the king remembered Lord Ram¹, took final permission from his Guru (Vasistha), and announced his departure for Janakpur by blowing the conch shell with full blast². (3)

[Note—¹This observation is very significant here. It clearly shows that Dasrath knew that Lord Ram, whom he calls his 'son', is none else but the Supreme Being in a human form. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Therefore, at the time of departure of the huge marriage procession, king Dasrath had invoked the blessings of Lord Ram in the same manner as one would pray to his family deity or some universally worshipped deity such as Lord Shiva or Lord Ganesh.

It is also to be noted here that the wise king deemed that all other deities have been worshipped, and their blessings sought and received, if he had offered his prayers to one single deity in the form of Lord Ram—because Lord Ram, being the 'Supreme Being', incorporates all other forms of divinity in his single body. In fact, worshipping Lord Ram is equivalent to worshipping the entire pantheon of gods and goddesses. This notion is endorsed by sage Valmiki also when he says exactly this thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Doha no. 129 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-6; (ii) Doha no. 130 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5, 8.

Therefore, king Dasrath did not think it necessary to offer special prayers to any other traditional deity such as Lord Shiva or Lord Ganesh at the time of departure for Janakpur.

²The sound of the blowing of the conch shell is considered the most auspicious sound one can hear at the start of any endeavour. For instance, it is sounded at the start of all religious ceremonies and festivities, including the fire sacrifices and recitation of hymns, at the time of commencement of a journey or any other enterprise, even at the time of the commencement of a battle.

We shall read a little later on in this narration that when the Lord Ram's marriage party started from Janakpur back on its journey for Ayodhya, many musical instruments were played, and the conch shell was one of them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 344.

Even on an earlier occasion we have read that when Lord Ram had broken the bow, a number of musical instruments were played, and at that time also the conch was blown. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Then again, the conch was sounded when king Janak invited king Dasrath to come to the venue of the marriage ceremony in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

हरषे बिबुध बिलोकि बराता । बरषहिं सुमन सुमंगल दाता ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣē bibudha bilōki barātā. baraṣahiṁ sumana sumāṅgala dātā. 4.

The gods were jubilant when they saw the marriage procession. They showered flowers from the heaven upon this procession, symbolising their blessings as well as the auspiciousness and the sanctity of the occasion. (4)

[Note—There are countless instances of the gods showering flowers and giving blessings from the heaven. For instance, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194 at the time of birth of Lord Ram; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262 when the gods have showered flowers upon Lord Ram when the Lord broke the bow of Shiva; (iii) Doha no. 264 when Sita had put the victory garland on Lord Ram; (iv) Doha no. 285 after the angry sage Parashuram had to concede defeat at the hands of Lord Ram and left for the forest after seeking forgiveness from the Lord; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309 when the hosts, king Janak, had welcomed the guests, the marriage party of Lord Ram; (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314 when king Dasrath proceeded towards the site of the marriage ceremony along with his royal retinue and his four sons; (vii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323, Doha no. 324 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7, and Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327 when Sita came to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be held, as well as during the proceedings of the rituals.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 it is clearly stated that the “gods showered flowers from the sky, and the Brahmins chanted hymns invoking peace and prosperity on various occasions when they found it fit to do so”.]

भयउ कोलाहल हय गय गाजे । व्योम बरात बाजने बाजे ॥ ५ ॥

सुर नर नारि सुमंगल गाई । सरस राग बाजहिं सहनाई ॥ ६ ॥

bhaya'u kōlāhala haya gaya gājē. byōma barāta bājanē bājē. 5.
sura nara nāri sumāṅgala gā'īm. sarasa rāga bājahīm sahanā'īm. 6.

At that time (i.e. at the time of the departure of the marriage procession from Ayodhya) there was a loud din created by the neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants and the playing of different types of musical instruments, both in the heaven (played by the gods) as well as in the marriage procession itself (on the ground)¹. (5)

On that occasion, the gods, the men and the women sang auspicious songs in melodious voices. The clarionets were played melodiously, set to various sweet tunes². (6)

[Note—¹Again, like the numerous instances of the blowing of the conch shell and the showering of flowers, there are other instances also when musical instruments were played so loud that the din and the cacophony of sound made it impossible for a person to hear what others were speaking—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 301.

On each happy point of time, the gods had played their musical instruments in the heaven, the sky, and the citizens had done so on earth. Some of the instances are the following—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262 when Lord Ram had broken the bow; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265 when Sita had placed the victory garland on Lord Ram; (iii) Doha no. 285 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306 when the marriage party arrived at Janakpur; (v) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no.

317 at the time of Lord Ram riding the horse and going towards the venue of the marriage ceremony; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 318 at the time when the guests were welcomed at the venue; (vii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319 when the guests were seated in the pavilion; (viii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323 when Sita had arrived at the site to attend the marriage rituals; (ix) Doha no. 324 during the proceedings of the marriage rituals; and (x) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 344 when the marriage party arrived at Ayodhya.

²Some of the other places where a reference is made of the playing of the “clarinet” are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263 when Lord Ram had broken the bow; (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 344 at the time of the arrival of the marriage procession at Ayodhya.]

घंट घंटी धुनि बरनि न जाहीं । सरव करहिं पाइक फहराहीं ॥ ७ ॥
करहिं बिदूषक कौतुक नाना । हास कुसल कल गान सुजाना ॥ ८ ॥

ghaṇṭa ghaṇṭī dhuni barani na jāhīm. sarava karahīm pā'ika phaharāhīm. 7.
karahīm bidūṣaka kautuka nānā. hāsa kusala kala gāna sujānā. 8.

There was a huge clamour of clinging of bells, small and big, that was accompanied by the boisterous noise made by acrobats and gymnasts who leapt and danced, showing their skills in such feats, as they moved alongside the procession. (7)

Jesters and clowns tried all the tricks of their trade in different ways.

There was cheer and merriment everywhere as auspicious songs were sung melodiously (as the procession wend its way to Janakpur). (8)

[Note—These skilled professional people, the clowns, the jesters, the acrobats and the gymnasts were taken along to keep everyone entertained during the long journey from Ayodhya to Janakpur.]

दो०. तुरग नचावहिं कुअँर बर अकनि मृदंग निसान ।
नागर नट चितवहिं चकित डगहिं न ताल बंधान ॥ ३०२ ॥

dōhā.

turaga nacāvahīm ku'amra bara akani mṛdaṅga nisāna.
nāgara naṭa citavahīm cakita ḍagahīm na tāla bamdhāna. 302.

Gallant princes and brave knights astride horses made their respective animals dance in step with the beat of the tunes being played by the musical instruments such as the tabor and the kettle-drums.

They did this so expertly that professional dancers known as the “Nats”, who were well accomplished in the art of dancing to the rhythm of musical instruments, watched them in awe and were spell-bound by their expertise. (Doha no. 302)

[Note—We have already read about these gallant princes and knights riding magnificent horses that were young and swift to manauvere, making the animals dance and hop skillfully as they waited on the outskirts of Ayodhya in preparation for the departure of

the marriage procession. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 299.

Now, when they watched the acrobats, the gymnasts, the clowns and the jesters perform tricks, they too joined in the celebrations, showing their skills in tackling the horses. Since making the animal dance perfectly in tune with the rhythm of the beat of the tabor and the kettle-drum was not a child's play but required expertise of the highest order, other professional dancers watched them in awe and amazement.

So we have a marriage procession where entertainment was galore—there was music, song and dance, there were jokers to crack wise jokes, there were acrobats and gymnasts performing great physical exercises, and there were elegantly attired princes and knights on horsebacks adding colour to the procession with their ostentatious feats with the horses. In short, it was a scene resembling a great moving circus of sorts that kept all spectators fully engaged and entertained all along the long journey to Janakpur.]

चौ०. बनइ न बरनत बनी बराता । होहिं सगुन सुंदर सुभदाता ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

banā'i na baranata banī barātā. hōhiṁ saguna sundara subhadātā. 1.

The marriage party and the procession were so magnificent and grand that it is not feasible for anyone to describe them. Auspicious omens began to occur one after another. [These omens and signs would be described in the following verses.] (1)

[Note—Remember: It was not an ordinary marriage procession, but one of the Lord of the world in his human incarnation. Besides this, it was a marriage procession of an Emperor's son, so grandeur, magnificence, pomp and pageantry were naturally expected.

We have already read about the constituents of this marriage procession—chariots, horses, elephants, mules, oxen, camels, musicians, musical instruments and their sounds such as those of bells, kettle-drums and blowing of conch shells etc., elderly Brahmins, noble princes, gallant knights, expert acrobats, gymnasts and jesters, a huge retinue of faithful servants, palanquin bearers and porters, and so on and so forth.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali", Uttar Kand, verse no. 180 where a summary of signs that are considered auspicious has been given.]

चारा चाषु बाम दिसि लेई । मनहुँ सकल मंगल कहि देई ॥ २ ॥

cārā cāṣu bāma disi lē'ī. manahum̐ sakala maṅgala kahi dē'ī. 2.

[Verse nos. 2-8 list the auspicious signs that appeared at that time as the marriage procession of Lord Ram moved away from Ayodhya on its onwards journey to Janakpur.]

The beautiful bird with the blue neck (i.e. the blue jay; "cārā cāṣu") picked up its food that was on its left (i.e. by turning its face towards its left side instead of picking up the food on its right side) to indicate that everything is auspicious and fine. [This was the first auspicious omen.] (2)

[Note—It is believed, according to traditions, that when one sees a blue jay (or even a magpie) in the afternoon, it is a good sign, especially when one is about to start on a long journey or enterprise. This bird is habituated in making sweet calls with a pleasant voice. So, as it picked up its food on its left by turning the neck sideways and made a sweet call, whoever heard it regarded it as an auspicious sign.]

दाहिन काग सुखेत सुहावा । नकुल दरसु सब काहूँ पावा ॥ ३ ॥

dāhina kāga sukhēta suhāvā. nakula darasu saba kāhūṁ pāvā. 3.

On the right-hand side of the procession one could see a crow (or, a group of crows; “kāga”) sitting quietly in a field that was pleasant to behold (i.e. the field where the crow was seen was green, cultivated, properly watered, had wonderful crops and was generally well kempt, instead of being a barren land that was infested with wild plants and shrubs). [This was the second auspicious omen.]

Everyone could see the mongoose (“nakula” which crossed the path of the marriage procession, and could also be seen running here and there in the fields). [This was the third auspicious omen.] (3)

सानुकूल बह त्रिबिध बयारी । सघट सबाल आव बर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

sānukūla baha tribidha bayārī. saghaṭa sabāla āva bara nārī. 4.

A pleasant breeze blew that had all the three great qualities that are expected in a breeze to make a man feel happy, delighted, relaxed and comfortable during his good days—i.e. it was soft, it was fragrant, and it was cool. [This was the fourth auspicious omen.]

Then there came a beautiful, virtuous woman with a pitcher full of water and a child in her arms. [This was the fifth auspicious omen.] (4)

लोवा फिरि फिरि दरसु देखावा । सुरभी सनमुख सिसुहि पिआवा ॥ ५ ॥

lōvā phiri phiri darasu dēkhāvā. surabhī sanamukha sisuhi pi'āvā. 5.

A fox (lōvā) could be seen stopping midway while it ran to repeatedly look backwards over its shoulders at the marriage procession. [This was the sixth auspicious omen.]

A milch cow (surabhī) could be seen in the front, feeding its calf. [This was the seventh auspicious omen.] (5)

मृगमाला फिरि दाहिनि आई । मंगल गन जनु दीन्हि देखाई ॥ ६ ॥

mṛgamālā phiri dāhini āī. maṅgala gana janu dīnhi dēkhāī. 6.

A herd of deer, walking in a queue one behind the other just like the flowers are arranged one on the top of the other in a garland (mrgamālā), went round the procession in a clockwise manner, and came to its right flank from the left side as if auspicious omens could be seen in a physical form in the guise of the herd of deer. [This was the eighth auspicious omen.] (6)

[Note—The deer went to the rear of the procession, came onto its left flank, ran ahead of the procession, and then crossed the road from the left side to the right-hand side. This was equivalent to the herd making a circumambulation of the procession, which is an auspicious sign.]

छेमकरी कह छेम बिसेषी । स्यामा बाम सुतरु पर देखी ॥ ७ ॥

chēmakarī kaha chēma bisēṣī. syāmā bāma sutaru para dēkhī. 7.

The auspicious bird known as ‘chēmakarī’ (which is a kite with a white neck and a red-tinged body)¹ was making a call symbolising a declaration of auspiciousness and all sorts of well-being. [This was the ninth auspicious omen.]

The black bird (syāmā)² could be seen on a beautiful tree to the left-hand side of the procession, which again was an auspicious sighting. [This was the tenth auspicious omen.] (7)

[Note—¹The Kshemkari bird is considered auspicious because of the two colours on its body—white and red. It is believed to represent the holy river Ganges and goddess Gauri, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Refer: Tulsidas’ “Kavitawali”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 180.

²The black bird is heard to sing in a melodious voice in the early hours of dawn, before sun-rise.]

सनमुख आयउ दधि अरु मीना । कर पुस्तक दुइ बिप्र प्रबीना ॥ ८ ॥

sanamukha āya'u dadhi aru mīnā. kara pustaka du'i bipra prabīnā. 8.

Then came two men—one holding a pot containing curd, and the other held a fish in his hand (dadhi aru mīnā). [These were the eleventh and the twelfth auspicious omens respectively.]

And finally came two expert Brahmins holding books (scriptures) in their hands (kara pustaka du'i bipra). [This was the thirteenth auspicious omen.] (8)

दो०. मंगलमय कल्याणमय अभिमत फल दातार ।

जनु सब साचे होन हित भए सगुन एक बार ॥ ३०३ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgalamaya kalyānamaya abhimata phala dātāra.
janu saba sēcē hōna hita bha'ē saguna ēka bāra. 303.

All the omens that are harbingers of auspiciousness, welfare, well-beings and fulfilment of all desires decided to appear simultaneously so as to prove that their reputation and qualities are indeed true and trustworthy. (Doha no. 303)

[Note—In other words, these omens wished to tell the world that their reputation as being signs of good fortunes whenever they appear is true and trustworthy and not something based on imagination or superstition. They knew very well that since it is a marriage procession of Lord Ram, the incarnate Lord Vishnu, the best of good fortunes and the best of good tidings are taken for granted to happen irrespective of whether they appear or not. So they thought to themselves—‘Why not make our presence felt on this happy occasion to prove ourselves true and effective, because auspiciousness and fortunate events will nevertheless occur whether or not we mark our presence felt there. If we miss this golden opportunity to prove our trustworthiness and truthfulness as harbingers of good fortunes and well-being, then we won’t get another sure-shot chance to do so again and overcome those who are sceptical about our abilities and potentials as harbingers of good times. We are shown respect and welcome by the world because the people think that our presence would give them happiness and joy, so let us use this opportunity to reinforce the people’s faith and trust in us and our abilities to provide them with cheer and auspiciousness.’

Therefore, all sorts of auspicious omens assumed a personified form as enumerated in the foregoing verses to prove themselves true, trustworthy and effective.]

चौ०. मंगल सगुन सुगम सब ताकें । सगुन ब्रह्म सुंदर सुत जाकें ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

maṅgala saguna sugama saba tākēṁ. saguna brahma sundara suta jākēṁ. 1.

It is expected that all sorts of auspiciousness and good omens would willingly appear for him (Dasrath) who is blessed and fortunate enough to beget the invisible, attributeless, subtle and all-pervading cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’ in a ‘Sagun form’ (i.e. a form of the Supreme Being that is visible, and has a gross physical form with attributes) as his son. (1)

[Note—This ‘Sagun form of Brahm’ that is born as a ‘son of king Dasrath’ is known as Lord Ram. As to the question why the supreme Lord decided to become Dasrath’s son, the answer is elaborately narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 141—to Doha no. 152; and (ii) from Sortha/Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness of creation as envisioned by the Upanishads, and is therefore the Absolute Truth of creation, the Reality of existence. Anything that is the ultimate ‘truth’ is pure and divine, and the glorious virtues of truth, purity and divinity are ‘beautiful virtues’. Anything else is ‘un-beautiful’ or ‘ugly and untrue’.

The adjective ‘Sundar’ means beautiful in simple terms. This beauty is measured at two levels—the physical level that is visible to the eye, and the subtle level that is not

visible to the eye. Lord Ram's physical magnetic personality that enthralled the whole world and held its attention captive with its matchless charm is the grosser, the physical aspect of the beauty of the Lord. The divine qualities, sublime virtues, the principles of Dharma (probity, propriety, ethics, morality, righteousness and nobility) for which the Lord stood and held in high esteem by the world, virtues that are commonly known as the different noble 'Gunas' that the Lord possessed, were symbolic of the beauty of the Lord at a subtle level.

So in essence, the 'beauty' that is being referred to here when we talk of Lord Ram is not merely the physical charm of the Lord but also, and more importantly, the combined charm of his noble character, his noble thoughts, his noble qualities and his noble life and deeds that were meant to be an example for others to emulate.]

राम सरिस बरु दुलहिनि सीता । समधी दसरथु जनकु पुनीता ॥ २ ॥

सुनि अस व्याहु सगुन सब नाचे । अब कीन्हे बिरंचि हम साँचे ॥ ३ ॥

rāma sarisa baru dulahini sītā. samadhī dasarathu janaku punītā. 2.
suni asa byāhu saguna saba nācē. aba kīnhē biran̄ci hama sām̄cē. 3.

In the marriage that was going to be solemnised soon, the groom would be none other than Lord Ram, an incarnate Lord of the world, the bride would be Sita, who is no one else but goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the world, herself in a physical form, and the two kings, Dasrath and Janak, would be the parents of the groom and the bride respectively. (2)

When the personified forms of the good omens (visualised as different semi-gods who had assumed various forms as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 303) heard of this rarest of rare combination (as narrated in verse no. 2 herein above), they were so exhilarated and happy at their good luck that they danced with joy and excitement, thinking that finally a golden and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity has been created for them by 'Biranchi', the Creator Brahma, which would establish without doubt their reputation as true and effective harbingers of good fortunes and auspiciousness of all kinds.

So they exclaimed delightedly, 'It is now that the Creator has for once proved us, the Good Omens collectively, true to our names as harbingers of good fortunes and auspiciousness of all kinds.' (3)

[Note—In other words, since it was such a rare occurrence that marked a divine union of the cosmic Lord in the physical form of Lord Ram with his cosmic counterpart, the Shakti, in the form of Sita, in the presence of two exceptionally fortunate souls in the bodies of kings Dasrath and Janak, good tidings and good fortunes were bound to be there on that occasion. In this scenario when all happiness, all joy, all goodness and all auspiciousness were compulsorily obliged to be present whether or not the omens make their presence felt, the latter decided not to miss this opportunity and make it a point to appear in their full forms, with their full regalia and splendour—because they did not want to lose this rare and god-sent chance to convince the world that if they are present on any occasion then good tidings, auspiciousness, happiness and joy were bound to be there.

On the contrary, if any one of them missed this chance and failed to make their presence felt on the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's marriage then the world would be

convinced that the earlier belief that it held about a particular omen standing for some specific good happening was merely a hearsay and a false presumption because in spite of the relevant omen's absence during the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram, that specific good happening did occur nevertheless.

In other words, the world would be convinced that it was wrong to link the happening of something good to any particular omen; it was a mere chance that both—the good happening and the omen—coincided with each other. The world would think that actually the omen has no special ability to bring good tidings or make good things happen. The result would be disastrous for that particular omen as it would become irrelevant for the people who would stop giving it its importance and value. No one would pay any regards to it in the future, and the omen would forfeit the right to be sought out and honoured by the people of the world in general.]

एहि बिधि कीन्ह बरात पयाना । हय गय गाजहिं हने निसाना ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bidhi kīnha barāta payānā. haya gaya gājahiṁ hanē nisānā. 4.

On this wise, amidst celebrations and festivities galore, the marriage party of Lord Ram proceeded from Ayodhya in a grand, royal procession that was attended by a thunderous noise created by the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of elephants as soon as the kettle-drums began to beat at the time of departure. [That is, as soon as the signal was given to start, musical instruments began playing, and their sound provoked the horses and the elephants to neigh and trumpet wildly, creating a cacophony of sound that was deafening. But everyone enjoyed this noise as it was a happy occasion.] (4)

[Note—In Chaupai line no. 3 that preceded Doha no. 302 we have read that “the king set forth from his palace to the accompaniment of the blowing of conch shells”. The marriage party had assembled outside the city, on its outskirts. Hence, this verse refers to the moment when the procession finally started off on its onwards journey to Janakpur from the suburbs of Ayodhya where everyone had collected independently to join the party.]

आवत जानि भानुकुल केतू । सरितन्हि जनक बँधाए सेतू ॥ ५ ॥
बीच बीच बर बास बनाए । सुरपुर सरिस संपदा छाए ॥ ६ ॥

āvata jāni bhānukula kētū. saritanhi janaka bamdhā'ē sētū. 5.
bīca bīca bara bāsa banā'ē. surapura sarisa sampadā chā'ē. 6.

Meanwhile, when Janak heard the news that the chief of the solar race, i.e. king Dasrath, has embarked on his journey for Janakpur, he (hastily) ordered that all the rivers be bridged to facilitate their crossing by the huge marriage procession¹. (5)

At convenient places en-route, Janak had got inns and rest-houses constructed. These places were so well organised and furnished that they provided all possible comforts that vied with the ones found in the city of the gods. [In other words, these way-side resting places were made so comfortable and pleasant that they resembled heaven on earth in every respect. All imaginable paraphernalia and accoutrements of physical comfort and pleasure were provided for in ample terms at these places.]² (6)

[Note—¹There is an interesting observation to be made here. This verse says that “Janak got the bridges constructed as soon as he heard that the marriage party was on its way to Janakpur”. This means that the bridges were not there till then. The rivers used to form natural boundaries between kingdoms, and also served as a natural barrier to prevent invasion from enemies. Janak had waited till the last moment because he was not sure how Dasrath, a senior king to him in stature, would treat the invitation to come down to Janakpur. The reason for this doubt was that Janak had not sent Dasrath an invitation to attend the bow ceremony, and now that the latter was being invited to the same place after the ceremony was over may not go down well with Dasrath, and though his son was successful in this competition and had won the hands of the kingdom’s princess in marriage but still his father may decline to come.

Should this happen there would be no need to construct the bridges, and the status quo would be maintained. Everything was kept ready, and as soon as the good news arrived through spies that the marriage party has departed from Ayodhya—or probably much earlier when the invitation was well-received by Dasrath and he had ordered the preparations to be made, the bridges were constructed on a ‘war-footing’.

Remember: Janak was a great king in his own right, and all kings maintained an army complete with its various wings. The ‘engineering corps’ responsible to maintain the army’s hardware and to look after other mechanical aspects, and to help the marching army overcome obstacles was obviously an integral part of any army worth its name. A great army on a campaign has to rapidly cross rivers and other natural barriers, and that wing of the army responsible to take care of logistics and other mechanical support is adept at tackling such things. So it’s not surprising that Janak’s army got the bridges over the rivers built ahead of the marriage procession of Lord Ram that was headed to Janakpur.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 307 that describes how Sita, the maverick goddess Laxmi that presides over all material comforts and worldly prosperity in this creation, the goddess that takes care of all material needs and well-being of the creatures in this creation, had employed her magical powers to create a world resembling utopia and heaven-on-earth as soon as the party arrived at Janakpur. No one could understand the reality of the situation that the never-ending chain of grand royal comforts that were made available to them for their pleasure and convenience were super-human in nature, and hence were not the ones created by ordinary human beings but by the presiding goddess who is in-charge of providing material comfort to the world, i.e. by goddess Laxmi herself.

This being the case, it is easy to understand how and why these rest-houses were well-provided for with all imaginable items of physical comfort and convenience to make the marriage party as happy and comfortable as possible. The result was that no one felt the weariness of the long journey from Ayodhya to Janakpur.]

असन सयन बर बसन सुहाए । पावहिं सब निज निज मन भाए ॥ ७ ॥

नित नूतन सुख लखि अनुकूले । सकल बरातिन्ह मंदिर भूले ॥ ८ ॥

asana sayana bara basana suhā'ē. pāvahim saba nija nija mana bhā'ē. 7.
nita nūtana sukha lakhi anukūlē. sakala barātinha mandira bhūlē. 8.

These resting places provided excellent food, beds and clothings to all the guests according to their individual likings. [When anyone wished to have something, it was immediately made available to him.] (7)

When the members of the marriage party saw newer comforts being made available to them on each passing day, when they found that new pleasures of their individual liking readily available any time of the day when they wished, and for all the days enroute, they felt so delighted and contented that all of them forgot about the comforts and pleasures of their respective homes. (8)

[Note—It was a long journey, and as is usual with travelers, they could have felt weary and home-sick after a few days on the road. The citizens of Ayodhya were accustomed to enjoy the best of material comforts of the world, and so would have easily felt the discomfort of being away from home. But the rest houses constructed by king Janak were so exceptionally well-provided for that none of the members of the marriage party had anything to complain about; rather, all of them felt as if they had come out fresh of their homes to enjoy a pleasurable outing, or were going on some picnic to enjoy themselves.]

दो०. आवत जानि बरात बर सुनि गहगहे निसान ।

सजि गज रथ पदचर तुरग लेन चले अगवान ॥ ३०४ ॥

dōhā.

āvata jāni barāta bara suni gahagahē nisāna.

saji gaja ratha padacara turaga lēna calē agavāna. 304.

When it was heard in Janakpur that the grand marriage procession has arrived, the kettle-drums were sounded enthusiastically. Immediately thereafter, decorated elephants, chariots and foot soldiers as well as attendants and horses proceeded forward to welcome the incoming guests. (Doha no. 304)

[Note—Royal messengers and lookouts were appointed at strategic locations all along the route within the territory of the kingdom of Janakpur. So, as soon as the marriage procession was near the city, celebrations started. The arrival of the marriage party was announced by the beating of the kettle-drums, and the advance party that was prepared before hand to go and receive the guests while they were still on the outer fringes of the sprawling city, was dispatched forthwith.

This advance welcoming party consisted of decorated elephants, horses and chariots, as well as foot soldiers and attendants in wonderful royal finery, and carrying the kingdom's insignia and other symbols of royalty to accord a warm welcome, with full state honours, to the privileged guests.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse no. 120—121.]

चौ०. कनक कलस भरि कोपर थारा । भाजन ललित अनेक प्रकारा ॥ १ ॥

भरे सुधासम सब पकवाने । नाना भाँति न जाहिं बखाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kanaka kalasa bhari kōpara thārā. bhājana lalita anēka prakārā. 1.
bharē sudhāsama saba pakavānē. nānā bhāmṭi na jāhiṃ bakhānē. 2.

[Verse nos. 1-6 have to be read together to understand their meaning. All these verses collectively describe the refreshments and gifts that king Janak, the father of Sita, had sent to the arriving marriage party as a formal gesture of warm welcome.]

When the marriage party arrived, king Janak sent many types of delectable refreshments, both in the form of drinks that were sweet and cool and tasted like Amrit (ambrosia), as well as in the form of tasty and aromatic food (snacks) that were very delicious and cooked in a variety of ways (fried, baked, roasted, smoked, barbecued, boiled, steamed etc.). These drinks and eatables were contained in beautiful golden jars and large and small plates and platters respectively. The variety and form of these dishes and refreshing drinks were so huge and varied that it is not possible to describe them. (1-2)

[Note—These gifts and refreshments were carried by the advance party sent by king Janak to receive and welcome the guests as narrated in Doha no. 304.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 328 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that describe the elaborate feast that was organised to feed the marriage party after the marriage ceremony was over.]

फल अनेक बर बस्तु सुहाई । हरषि भेंट हित भूप पठाई ॥ ३ ॥

phala anēka bara bastu suhā'īm. haraṣi bhēṇṭa hita bhūpa paṭhā'īm. 3.

The king cheerfully sent as gifts many types of fruits (that were fresh and seasonal, as well as dry and had been canned for storage), as well as many other charming things (such as nuts, edible roots, leaves etc., both of the local variety as well as those that were exotic in nature). (3)

भूषन बसन महामनि नाना । खग मृग हय गय बहुबिधि जाना ॥ ४ ॥

bhūṣana basana mahāmani nānā. khaga mṛga haya gaya bahubidhi jānā. 4.

Many types of ceremonial robes and other wearing apparels and raiments suitable for the occasion, precious gems and stones, tamed animals such as birds, deer, horses and elephants etc. were also sent by the king as welcome-gifts for the marriage party. (4)

मंगल सगुन सुगंध सुहाए । बहुत भाँति महिपाल पठाए ॥ ५ ॥

maṅgala saguna sugandha suhā'ē. bahuta bhāmṭi mahipāla paṭhā'ē. 5.

Besides the above items, the great king (“mahipāla”) sent various items that stood for good omens, such as different types of scents and perfumes that are usually used during all auspicious events. (5)

[Note—Some of these items were sandalwood, musk, camphor, saffron, incense, aromatic plants and their roots and extracts etc.]

दधि चिउरा उपहार अपारा । भरि भरि काँवरि चले कहारा ॥ ६ ॥

dadhi ci'urā upahāra apārā. bhari bhari kām̐vari calē kahārā. 6.

Other such items that stood for good omen which were sent by the king as gifts for the marriage party included curd and dried rice grains. All these gifts were carried by porters in palanquins and other vehicles. (6)

अगवानन्ह जब दीखि बराता । उर आनंदु पुलक भर गाता ॥ ७ ॥
देखि बनाव सहित अगवाना । मुदित बरातिन्ह हने निसाना ॥ ८ ॥

agavānanha jaba dīkhi barātā. ura ānandu pulaka bhara gātā. 7.
dēkhi banāva sahita agavānā. mudita barātinha hanē nisānā. 8.

When the members of the advance party deputed by king Janak to formally receive and welcome the arriving bridegroom's party saw the guests, all of them were filled with thrill and their hearts were overjoyed with delight. (7)

Similarly, when the bridegroom's party saw the deputation of hosts, who had arrived to meet and welcome them on behalf of the king of Janakpur, decked up in their best of finery and ceremonial regalia befitting the occasion, all of them were exhilarated and delighted beyond measure even as they started playing their kettle-drums enthusiastically in a loud cacophony of sound to signify their joy and happiness. (8)

[Note—The members of two great kingdoms have met each other for the first time, and there was a lot of bonhomie and celebration.

Another point to note is that the marriage procession of the bridegroom was already very huge, consisting of a large and varied numbers of animals and servants. To this huge number was added the gifts that Janak has sent now, and would be further increased manifold later on at the time of its departure back to Ayodhya when Janak would send more gifts in the form of servants, animals and costly gifts. Refer respectively to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 305; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334.

In other words, the length and breadth and the strength of the members of the marriage party increased manifold when it returned to its home city of Ayodhya. If it had stretched for miles at the time of departure from Ayodhya for Janakpur, it probably stretched from horizon to horizon on its return!]

दो०. हरषि परसपर मिलन हित कछुक चले बगमेल ।
जनु आनंद समुद्र दुइ मिलत बिहाइ सुबेल ॥ ३०५ ॥

dōhā.

haraṣi parasapara milana hita kachuka calē bagamēla.
janu ānanda samudra du'i milata bihā'i subēla. 305.

There was so much warmth and affection between of the two sides (i.e. the arriving party from Ayodhya representing the bridegroom's side, and the deputation sent by king Janak to receive and welcome the guests, representing the bride's side) that as soon as they were within sight of each other, some of the members from each side dashed forward enthusiastically to go and embrace their counterparts from the opposite side. The scene reminded one of two huge oceans meeting each other at a single place. (Doha no. 305)

[Note—There would be a thunderous roar when waters of two great oceans clash with each other, sending huge waves leaping up to touch the sky, and splurging and spraying of water for miles around. In other words, a thunderous roar of mutual congratulations and honour, of loud cheers of joy and happiness, a burst of ecstasy and exhilaration erupted when the two sides rushed to meet each other enthusiastically. It was a moment of celebration, but it could be compared to the uproarious cacophony created when two armies clashed with each other in battle, though this 'clash' was not to kill each other but to shower love, affection and thanksgiving as well as to congratulate and honour each other.

The two sides were so eager to meet each other that they forgot all formalities and decorum of royalty, but rushed to hug and embrace each other as if two fast friends have met each other after a long time.]

चौ०. बरषि सुमन सुर सुंदरि गावहिं । मुदित देव दुंदुभीं बजावहिं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

baraṣi sumana sura sundari gāvahiṁ. mudita dēva dundubhīṁ bajāvahiṁ. 1.

The celestial beauties and damsels (i.e. different goddesses and consorts of gods as well as the heavenly nymphs; "sura sundari") showered flowers (from the heaven) and sang melodious songs to celebrate the occasion, while the gods themselves enthusiastically played the kettle-drums. (1)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309 below.

The sequence of narration clearly indicates that the gods beat their drums to synchronise their beats with the rhythm and melody of songs sung by the goddesses and nymphs.

Another interesting observation can be made here: when the marriage party had began its journey from Ayodhya, both the gods as well as the goddesses had joined hands to sing auspicious songs and play the clarinet (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 302), but here in this present verse it is said that only the goddesses have sung songs while the gods have sounded the kettle-drums. It clearly means that on the earlier occasion, i.e. at Ayodhya at the time of departure of the party, the gods were in the heaven to join their counterparts, the goddesses, but then they

joined the marriage party in person and accompanied it to Janakpur. So now at present they are on earth along with the rest of the members of the marriage party. Hence, the goddesses shower flowers from the heaven and sing songs in the sky while the gods vigorously beat the musical drums below on earth.]

बस्तु सकल राखीं नृप आगें । बिनय कीन्हि तिन्ह अति अनुरागें ॥ २ ॥
प्रेम समेत रायँ सबु लीन्हा । भै बकसीस जाचकन्हि दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

bastu sakala rākhīm nrpa āgēm. binaya kīnhi tinha ati anurāgēm. 2.
prēma samēta rāyam̐ sabu līnhā. bhai bakasīsa jācakanhi dīnhā. 3.

Members of the advance reception party (deputed by king Janak to welcome king Dasrath and others in the marriage party) very politely placed all the gifts they had brought with them before the king (Dasrath), and prayed to him warmly to accept them gladly. (2)

The king in turn received the members of the deputation affectionately with great warmth, and accepted all the gifts cheerfully. The king then distributed these gifts to all alms-seekers and others as a gesture of generosity and magnanimity¹. (3)

[Note—¹It was a standard practice for great kings and noble men to give liberally to others whenever the occasion arose. Such liberal attitude was deeply engrained in the society in general also so much so that even a man of humble resources gave back to others things that he possessed whenever the occasion arrived. This gesture of giving liberally and sharing everything with others was more striking during happy occasions and ceremonial events. It will be clear when we see how the citizens had shared all gifts they received when we read about the celebrations in Ayodhya at the time of Lord Ram's birth (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194), then once again when there were wide-spread celebrations at Janakput when Lord Ram had broken the bow (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 262; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265) which are specific instances of this magnanimous attitude.]

करि पूजा मान्यता बड़ाई । जनवासे कहूँ चले लवाई ॥ ४ ॥
बसन बिचित्र पाँवड़े परहीं । देखि धनदु धन महु परिहरहीं ॥ ५ ॥
अति सुंदर दीन्हेउ जनवासा । जहँ सब कहूँ सब भाँति सुपासा ॥ ६ ॥

kari pūjā mān'yatā barā'ī. janavāsē kahum̐ calē lavā'ī. 4.
basana bicitra pām̐varē parahīm. dēkhi dhanadu dhana madu pariharahīm. 5.
ati sundara dīnhē'u janavāsā. jaham̐ saba kahum̐ saba bhām̐ti supāsā. 6.

After showing their reverence and paying due respect, obeisance and homage to the king (Dasrath)¹, the members of the deputation then escorted the marriage party to the 'Janwasa', a place that was especially earmarked for lodging and boarding the members of the bridegroom's party. (4)

Warm reception awaited the party at the lodging place where ceremonial mats made of marvellous materials were laid out for them. Even the god of wealth, known as

Kuber who is regarded as the custodian of the wealth of heaven, felt shy and humbled when he saw the opulence, the pomp and the grandeur of the welcome that was extended to the marriage party of the groom². (5)

The members of the deputation gave the members of the bridegroom's party lodging places that were well equipped, pleasant, beautiful and glamorous in all possible ways, where all means of physical comfort and pleasure and joy were provided in abundance. (6)

[Note—¹The bridegroom's close relatives are always shown great respect by members of the bride's family in traditional Indian households. So, king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party were literally worshipped ('Pooja') by members of the advance reception party deputed to welcome them.

²Kuber is proud of the fact that he presides over the wealth of heaven, the richest treasury of creation. But when he saw the opulence of Janak he felt shy of his wealth. He had also felt shy when he observed the wealth of Ayodhya, the kingdom of king Dasrath and Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324.]

जानी सियँ बरात पुर आई । कछु निज महिमा प्रगटि जनाई ॥ ७ ॥
हृदयँ सुमिरि सब सिद्धि बोलाई । भूप पहुनई करन पठाई ॥ ८ ॥

jānī siyam̐ barāta pura āī. kachu nija mahimā pragaṭi janāī. 7.
hṛdayam̐ sumiri saba sid'dhi bōlāīṁ. bhūpa pahunaī karana paṭhāīṁ. 8.

When Sita heard the news that the marriage party has arrived in Janakpur, she wished to exhibit some of her mystical powers¹. (7)

In order to do so, she remembered all the Siddhis (personified forms of mystical powers that can produce miracles which defy explanation and worldly logic) in her heart and invited (invoked; summoned) all of them. Then she asked them to go and serve the king (Dasrath). (8)

[Note—¹Ordinary people had not known that Sita was a divine Shakti (dynamic energy of creation that is an inseparable part of the cosmic Creator) in a personified form as a lady. Lord Ram's stupendous powers and his out-of-the-world abilities had come to be well-known by many of the recent developments such as liberation of Ahilya, killing of demons Subahu and his army while the Lord protected sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice, and the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow which had steadfastly defied the combined strength of all the human kings and emperors of the world. To break this bow was a super-human feat in its own right.

But till now there was not a single event in the public domain that would establish the mystical powers of Sita, that she was not an ordinary human princess but a divine Shakti that was about to be united with the cosmic Lord of creation in the form of Sri Ram. So, Sita wished to utilise this occasion to show-case her mystical powers.

She also wished to indicate to Lord Ram by this subtle hint that she indeed is the right choice for him.

It ought to be noted here that in ancient times even great sages had this power to invoke the Siddhis whenever they needed them. This is evident when sage Bharadwaj had invoked the same Siddhis to serve Bharat and the huge army that accompanied him when he was going to the forest to try and bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya from his forest

exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Doha no. 215.]

दो०. सिद्धि सब सिय आयसु अकनि गई जहाँ जनवास ।
लिएँ संपदा सकल सुख सुरपुर भोग बिलास ॥ ३०६ ॥

dōhā.

sidhi saba siya āyasu akani ga'īm jahām janavāsa.
li'ēm sampadā sakala sukha surapura bhōga bilāsa. 306.

All the different Siddhis, who came at the call of Sita, accepted her orders (to serve the marriage party of Lord Ram) and went to the place where the bridegroom's party had been lodged. They carried with them all imaginable types of ingredients needed for providing the party with physical as well as material comforts and pleasures that compared favourably with those available to the gods in heaven. (Doha no. 306)

[Note—We have read above in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes this Doha no. 306 that the place where the marriage party of the groom was lodged was well-provided with all the amenities one can expect in this world to meet one's physical comforts and needs. But provision of these comforts was limited to the extent of human capabilities.

When Sita asked the various Siddhis to take care of the party, the amenities these Siddhis provided were of a heavenly dimension, i.e. they far exceeded what humans could arrange for because the Siddhis refer to super-natural mystical powers possessed by the gods.

Thus we see the difference between the facilities that were available to the members of the marriage party upon arrival at their respective places of lodging, and the sudden upgrading of these facilities to a much higher scale upon intervention of Sita.

The type of comforts and pleasures that were provided by these Siddhis has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 215.]

चौ०. निज निज बास बिलोकि बराती । सुर सुख सकल सुलभ सब भाँती ॥ १ ॥
बिभव भेद कछु कोउ न जाना । सकल जनक कर करहिं बखाना ॥ २ ॥
सिय महिमा रघुनायक जानी । हरषे हृदयँ हेतु पहिचानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nija nija bāsa bilōki barātī. sura sukha sakala sulabha saba bhām'tī. 1.
bibhava bhēda kachu kō'u na jānā. sakala janaka kara karahim bakhānā. 2.
siya mahimā raghunāyaka jānī. haraṣe hṛdayam'hētu pahicānī. 3.

Each member of the marriage party found in his own apartment amenities and accoutrements of immense comfort and pleasure that one would find in heaven. All the

paraphernalia of heavenly comfort that are available to the gods were made available to all the members of the bridegroom's party. (1)

No one, however, could guess the source of such out-of-the-world facilities; no one had an inkling of the mystery surrounding the availability of such heavenly enjoyments. [No one could know who was behind this arrangement.] So, everyone praised king Janak for his gracious nature and richness of the royal treasury. (2)

However, it was only Raghunayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) who could understand that this miracle was Sita's creation, and this realization about Sita's influences and mystical abilities made the Lord very happy in his heart. (3)

[Note—Every person in the groom's party thought that the heavenly facilities provided to them were arranged by king Janak, the bride's father. No one could even imagine that the real force that worked up this miracle was Sita.]

When Lord Ram heard of the exceptionally wonderful arrangements made for the comfort of his marriage party, he immediately recognized that it was the miraculous affect of Sita's mystical powers. Sita was a personified form of 'Shakti', the dynamic power of creation that is so astonishingly powerful that it can do anything it wishes. The Lord felt glad because it showed to him that the princess whom he was about to marry was indeed goddess Laxmi, Lord Vishnu's cosmic consort, in a personified form. It must be noted here in this context that Lord Ram himself was Lord Vishnu in the form of a human being.

The remarkable point to note here is this: Lord Ram has not yet visited the place where the party was lodged, because the Lord was staying at the place where sage Vishwamitra was staying, but still he could know about the sort of heavenly comforts that were provided for the marriage party. In other words, like Sita, Lord Ram too possessed mystical powers that transcended human abilities; the Lord could know about things and developments that were not immediately visible or apparent. Since Lord Ram was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, he had mystical powers that made him all-knowing and omnipresent; nothing was hidden or secret from him.

Lord Ram felt 'happy in his heart when he came to realize Sita's mystical powers' because they would come in handy for the Lord to fulfill his mission on earth—which was to eliminate the evil and cruel demon race. According to the master plan drawn by the Lord to eliminate the demons, Sita was to be abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and held captive. Sita would need exceptional powers to survive the ordeal and overcome the threats posed by the demons. An ordinary woman would not have been in a position to stand against these ferocious demons. So when Lord Ram observed the mystical powers of Sita he felt reassured that he would be able to successfully complete his mission on earth and safely return to the heaven with Sita in her primary form as goddess Laxmi.]

पितु आगमनु सुनत दोउ भाई । हृदयँ न अति आनंदु अमाई ॥ ४ ॥

सकुचन्ह कहि न सकत गुरु पाहीं । पितु दरसन लालचु मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

pitu āgamanu sunata dō'u bhā'ī. hṛdayam' na ati ānandu amā'ī. 4.

sakucanha kahi na sakata guru pāhīm. pitu darasana lālacu mana māhīm. 5.

When the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) heard about the arrival of their father (king Dasrath of Ayodhya), joy and delight overflowed in their hearts. (4)

They had a great desire to meet their father, but were hesitant to broach the subject with their Guru (sage Vishwamitra, with whom they were staying at the moment). (5)

[Note—It was the requirement of discipline and good manners that one does not disturb the Guru with petty desires. While in the company of a Guru, the disciple is expected to observe modesty in behaviour, self-restraint and discipline, not allowing oneself to be restless about worldly attractions and interactions. The arrival of king Dasrath was news that would surely be known to sage Vishwamitra in a short while, and then as surely enough the sage would go to meet him. The two brothers would naturally get an opportunity to meet their father then, so what was the hurry?

The two brothers had been away from their father for quite some time now. Dasrath was a doting father who loved his sons more dearly than his own life (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 and 10 that precede Doha no. 208). So it was natural that a great bond of affection, love and affinity existed between the two brothers and their father.

There are other instances as well where Lord Ram and Laxman had refrained from making bold requests to the sage to show respect to him and honour his dignity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 where Lord Ram had been extremely hesitant to request sage Vishwamitra to give him permission so that he and Laxman can go and visit the city of Janakpur for sight-seeing; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 225 which say that the two brothers felt afraid that the sage would get annoyed because they were late in returning to him after visiting Janakpur. These instances showed that the two brothers had the greatest respect for sage Vishwamitra and maintained the highest standards of discipline and modesty when dealing with the revered sage. They never behaved like spoilt princes of a mighty kingdom who become haughty and arrogant and do not give a dime to show respect to others.]

बिस्वामित्र बिनय बड़ि देखी । उपजा उर संतोषु बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥

हरषि बंधु दोउ हृदयँ लगाए । पुलक अंग अंबक जल छाए ॥ ७ ॥

चले जहाँ दसरथु जनवासे । मनहुँ सरोबर तकेउ पिआसे ॥ ८ ॥

bisvāmitra binaya baḍi dēkhī. upajā ura santōṣu bisēṣī. 6.
haraṣi bandhu dō'u hr̥dayam̐ lagā'ē. pulaka aṅga ambaka jala chā'ē. 7
calē jahām̐ dasarathu janavāsē. manahum̐ sarōbara takē'u pi'āsē. 8.

The wise sage Vishwamitra was exceptionally happy and satisfied when he noted the exemplary level of modesty and politeness that the brothers exhibited¹. (6)

The sage was so glad that he embraced the brothers most affectionately in a bear-hug, his body thrilled and tears welled-up in his eyes². (7)

Thereafter, the sage, accompanied by the two brothers, set off towards the place where king Dasrath had been lodged to meet him with the eagerness of a thirsty man who rushes towards a pond to drink water to quench his thirst³. (8)

[Note—¹The sage expected such behaviour from them. Being in the company of a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra who was renowned for his self-discipline and modesty would be deemed fruitful if the person acquires some of the sage's virtues in the same way as something that is in touch with sandalwood would acquire some of the fragrance

of the latter. If a disciple does not learn from his learned teacher, the Guru, then he is not eligible to be called a true disciple. So the sage felt happy that the two brothers were acting in a matured way, have learnt discipline, modesty and self-control, as well as the principles of good behaviour and politeness.

²At the time when Dasrath had sent Lord Ram and Laxman with Vishwamitra he had told the sage that from then onwards the latter would be deemed to be their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 208.

Later on we read that the learned sage had taught the two brothers the science and art of use of mystical weapons and warfare. So in this sense the sage became their Guru—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Therefore, for all practical purposes sage Vishwamitra was their father as well as their Guru; he combined the two roles in his self.

As far as fatherly affection was concerned, the sage had never let them feel that they were away from their natural father, king Dasrath. In fact, sage Vishwamitra's love and affection at least equalled if not surpassed that shown by their natural father. Tulsidas has liberally praised the sage's love for the two brothers in his another classic story of Lord Ram known as "Geetawali"—refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand (i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; verse no. 55, stanza no. 7; and verse no. 56, stanza no. 6.

³The analogy of the thirsty man rushing towards the pond to drink water is used here to indicate that the sage and the two brothers walked very briskly and eagerly towards the place where king Dasrath had been put up. The sage was eager to meet Dasrath and thank him for lending his two dearest sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, who had helped the sage overcome the fear of demons as well as give liberation to Ahilya, the cursed wife of sage Gautam who had now become obliged to Vishwamitra for enabling this to happen. The sage wished to convey to the king his immense sense of gratitude and thankfulness that the latter had allowed his two dear sons to accompany the sage and fulfil his wishes, to subtly tell the king that he had taken great care of his two beloved sons, and that it is time now that he wanted to hand over the two brothers back to him, with a lot of thanks and gratitude.

The two brothers obviously were eager to meet their father after such a long time. Their journey with sage Vishwamitra to the forest was the first occasion in their lives when the two brothers had been away from the fond care of their beloved and doting father for such long, and nostalgia and filial emotions therefore overtook them.]

दो०. भूप बिलोके जबहिं मुनि आवत सुतन्ह समेत ।

उठे हरषि सुखसिंधु महँ चले थाह सी लेत ॥ ३०७ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpa bilōkē jabahim muni āvata sutanha samēta.

uṭhē haraṣi sukhāsindhu mahum' calē thāha sī lēta. 307.

As soon as the king (Dasrath) saw the sage (Vishwamitra) coming to him along with the king's two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman), he immediately got up to welcome them, and walked towards them so eagerly that his steps seemed to fall unsteadily on the ground like a man who tries to walk into an ocean of bliss and happiness. (Doha no. 307)

[Note—When a man walks right into an ocean, he totters and stumbles each step of the way forward, barely able to keep his balance and hold his foot firmly on the water-soaked soft ground below. Likewise, when king Dasrath saw the sage and his two beloved sons coming to meet him, he rushed forward to receive them. So excited and overwhelmed with emotions was he that he stumbled and virtually fell over more than once in his hurry to meet them personally.]

The sight of the sage and the two princes coming to meet him was like the cool, refreshing and invigorating wave arising from an ocean of love and affection that rapidly moved towards the king and swept him off his feet. This wave reached the king much before the sage and the two brothers could, so as the king rushed forward to take a plunge in the blissfully soothing water of this ocean, he lost his mental and physical balance in his eagerness, and tottered and stumbled many a times.]

चौ०. मुनिहि दंडवत कीन्ह महीसा । बार बार पद रज धरि सीसा ॥ १ ॥
कौसिक राउ लिए उर लाई । कहि असीस पूछी कुसलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

munihi daṇḍavata kīnha mahīsā. bāra bāra pada raja dhari sīsā. 1.
kausika rā'u li'ē ura lāī. kahi asīsa pūchī kusalāī. 2.

The king prostrated before the sage, repeatedly placing his head on the dust of the blessed sage's feet (as a sign of showing great respect and reverence). (1)

Kausik (sage Vishwamitra) immediately lifted the king and embraced him most affectionately. He blessed the king and asked about his welfare. (2)

[Note—The meeting of sage Vishwamitra with king Dasrath here is in sharp contrast with their first meeting in Ayodhya when the sage had gone to ask him to lend Lord Ram and Laxman to him so that his fire sacrifice could be protected against the demons' wrath. Here the two have met enthusiastically and with exemplary warmth, whereas on the earlier occasion both these emotions were absent. The gestures of respect shown by Dasrath and blessings by Vishwamitra during their first meeting at Ayodhya were more in the nature of formalities rather than spontaneous show of affection and warmth for each other.]

What is the reason for this? Well, when the two met for the first time, king Dasrath became apprehensive of the sage's intentions because the sage was not a frequent visitor to his kingdom and court. So the king became suspicious about the reason of his visit. The king had observed that the sage's face was grim, he had a serious air about him, and his countenance as well as demeanours were grave, indicating that things were not rosy and cosy. The sage, on the other hand, was apprehensive whether the king would meet his demands and send Lord Ram and Laxman with him to the forest.

Therefore, the general atmosphere at the time of their first meeting was very somber and formal. But the situation had undergone a drastic change by now. Lord Ram and Laxman had attained matchless fame under the patronage of the sage: they had vanquished the unconquerable demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of the sage, Lord Ram had then liberated Ahilya, and later on broken the formidable bow which had put to shame all the mightiest kings of that time. Besides this, the two brothers had acquired expertise in the art and science of weaponry and warfare as a blessing of the

sage. None of these achievements would have been made possible if the sage hadn't taken them with him to the forest.

In other words, both the king and the sage felt greatly obliged and very thankful towards each other. This created an environment conducive for bubbly warmth, cordiality and bonhomie between the two.]

पुनि दंडवत करत दोउ भाई । देखि नृपति उर सुखु न समाई ॥ ३ ॥
सुत हियँ लाइ दुसह दुख मेटे । मृतक सरीर प्रान जु भेंटें ॥ ४ ॥

puni daṇḍavata karata dō'u bhā'ī. dēkhi nr̥pati ura sukhu na samā'ī. 3.
suta hiyaṁ lā'i dusaha dukha mēṭē. mṛtaka sarīra prāna janu bhēṇṭē. 4.

Then (i.e. after Dasrath and Vishwamitra had met each other and exchanged pleasantries) when the king saw that the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) had prostrated before him, he felt overwhelmed with delight and happiness so much so that his joy could not be contained in his heart, it virtually spilled over. (3)

He immediately lifted his sons and embraced them to get rid of all the worries and grief from which he had been suffering all the while due to their absence. The king felt invigorated and energized as if a dead body had met life ('Pran') once again.

[That is, just as a dead body becomes active and energized if new life is injected in it, the king felt rejuvenated and exceptionally cheerful upon meeting his two dear sons, Lord Ram and Laxman after a long gap of many days while they were away with sage Vishwamitra.] (4)

[Note—The king had always treated Lord Ram and Laxman as part of his 'Pran', a word meaning 'vital winds representing forces of life that keep the body of a creature alive'. This is clear when he said it expressly while handing them over to sage Vishwamitra in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208.

Hence, for all practical purposes, Dasrath had sent his 'Pran' with sage Vishwamitra, and had since then lived virtually like a man who has no energy and dynamism left in him, who is just managing to survive on external life-support system in the hope that one day his lost energy and dynamism would come back to him.

Thus, when the king met Lord Ram and Laxman once again it seemed that a dead body has been revived. The king's face beamed and glowed with joy; he breathed freely and his entire being seemed to be bubbling with new-found energy of life.]

पुनि बसिष्ठ पद सिर तिन्ह नाए । प्रेम मुदित मुनिबर उर लाए ॥ ५ ॥
बिप्र बृंद बंदे दुहुँ भाई । मनभावती असीसैं पाई ॥ ६ ॥

puni basiṣṭha pada sira tinha nā'ē. prēma mudita munibara ura lā'ē. 5.
bipra bṛnda bandē duhum' bhā'im̐. manabhāvatī asīsēm̐ pā'im̐. 6.

[After meeting their father—] The two brothers bowed at the holy feet of sage Vasistha (the royal priest and the Guru of the family). The sage was overwhelmed with love and affection for them, and he lifted them and clasped them to his bosom. (5)

Then the two brothers paid their respects to all the others Brahmins and seniors present there, and in return they received liberal blessings from them that were in accordance to their wishes and liking.

[In other words, each individual Brahmin blessed the two brothers independently, and all of them blessed that whatever the two brothers desired in their hearts would be fulfilled.] (6)

[Note—The blessings of the elderly Brahmins were open-ended in the sense that that they blessed Lord Ram and Laxman that whatever they wished would be made available to them.

Earlier, such open-ended blessing was given to them by sage Vishwamitra in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 237 at the time when the brothers had come back after visiting the royal garden and meeting Sita there.]

भरत सहानुज कीन्ह प्रनामा । लिए उठाइ लाइ उर रामा ॥ ७ ॥

हरषे लखन देखि दोउ भ्राता । मिले प्रेम परिपूरित गाता ॥ ८ ॥

bharata sahānuja kīnha pranāmā. li'ē uṭhā'i lā'i ura rāmā. 7.

haraṣē lakhana dēkhi dō'u bhrātā. milē prēma paripūrīta gātā. 8.

Then Bharat, along with his younger brother (Shatrughan) bowed before Lord Ram who picked them up affectionately and clasped them to his heart. (7)

Laxman too felt exhilarated when he saw his two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan), and they met each other enthusiastically. (8)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that when Bharat and Shatrughan were meeting Lord Ram, Laxman was watching, and he felt very happy. He was ready to meet Bharat and Shatrughan, so as soon as the two turned towards Laxman to pay their respects to him by bowing before him, Laxman immediately responded by holding them mid-way, and pulled them towards himself to hug them tightly.]

दो०. पुरजन परिजन जातिजन जाचक मंत्री मीत ।

मिले जथाबिधि सबहि प्रभु परम कृपाल बिनीत ॥ ३०८ ॥

dōhā.

purajana parijana jātijana jācaka mantrī mīta.

milē jathābidhi sabahi prabhu parama kṛpāla binīta. 308.

After that, the most gracious and merciful Lord (Sri Ram) affectionately met everyone else present on the occasion, such as the the citizens of Ayodhya, the attendants and other members of the royal entourage, kinsmen, family relations, alms-seekers, ministers and friends in a way that suited the stature and position of each individual. (Doha no. 308)

[Note—The Lord met everyone affectionately, but while doing so he maintained his dignity and traditional decorum of the society. For example, when he met Brahmins, his Guru and his father, he touched their feet or bowed before them to pay respect; when he met his brothers he embraced them; when he met his friends and companions he

exchanged pleasant notes with them and asked what they had been doing these past days; when he met his family members he asked how they were and what the news was back at home; when he met his ministers he wished them good and exchanged some information about the affairs of the kingdom; when he met his attendants and other junior members of the royal household he asked them how they were all and if everything was fine with them; and so on and so forth.

Virtually the same thing has happened much later on in the story when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his 14-year forest exile. At that time also the Lord had met everyone according to his stature in the society. Refer— Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Doha no. 6.]

चौ०. रामहि देखि बरात जुड़ानी । प्रीति कि रीति न जाति बखानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

rāmahi dēkhi barāta jurānī. prīti ki rīti na jāti bakhānī. 1.

All the members of bridegroom's party felt contented and delighted when they saw Lord Ram (once again after so many days). The ways of love and affection are so unique that it is not possible to define them or assign any criterion to them. (1)

[Note—Every citizen of Ayodhya had a personal equation with the Lord—some treated him as their friend, some as their prince, some as their son, some as their brother, some as a personified form of the Supreme Being, and so on. The Lord has magical powers in the sense that he can assume as many forms as he wishes, and therefore he appeared differently to different persons to please each single individual according to his liking or in the way he or she bonded with the Lord. In other words, those who treated the Lord as their friend saw him as a dear friend; those who regarded him as their prince saw him as such; those who had loved him as their son found their beloved son standing in front; those who regarded Lord Ram as their brother saw him as their sibling whom they were meeting after so many days of separation, and still others who visualised Lord Ram as an incarnation of the Supreme Being could see their revered deity revealed in the image of the Lord, and so on and so forth.

Irrespective of the way the individual citizens perceived the image of the Lord, irrespective of their age and social standing, and irrespective of their personal interaction with the Lord during his days at Ayodhya, love, affection and devotion was the common denominator in their relationship with him. So, the Lord fulfilled the wishes of all the citizens by appearing to them in the form they had known him and loved him. We see the same thing happening later on in the story when the Lord had come back to Ayodhya after the conquest of Lanka, when he had met all the eager citizens individually by assuming countless forms that were in accordance with the way each individual perceived and loved his or her Lord. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

All of them had longed to see their beloved Lord after so many days ever since he had gone away with sage Vishwamitra to protect his fire sacrifice. They were all worried and anxious about his well-being and safety because a forest is not a hospitable place for a prince to live in comfort in the first place, and then there was the special problem arising out of the presence of cruel demons.

Again, the notion that each individual had his or her personal view or perception of who Lord Ram was is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

The citizens were ‘delighted’ because they were seeing their beloved Lord after so many long days, and they were ‘contented’ because he was hale and hearty, unharmed, and as fine as they had last seen him at the time of his departure with sage Vishwamitra. When the news of Lord Ram marrying Sita had reached Ayodhya through the messengers sent by king Janak, the entire city had erupted in joy and each citizen had been delighted to hear this good news—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 296.

All the people were highly excited, and as the marriage party assembled outside Ayodhya for departure for Jankapur, all the citizens wondered how soon would they see their beloved Lord once again—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 300. So naturally when the final moment arrived when their dream of seeing and meeting their Lord became a reality, their happiness and joy knew no bounds.]

Another reason for the citizens becoming so exceptionally happy to see Lord Ram after so many days is that while the Lord was in Ayodhya they would see him and interact with him almost on a daily basis, and over time they had developed a personal bond of affection and love for the Lord because of his friendly, welcoming, amiable and affable nature. So when they could not see, meet and interact with the Lord over so many days after he had gone to the forest with sage Vishwamitra, they began to miss him very intensely. Therefore, when the opportunity came to see him personally once again and exchange greetings and pleasantries and notes, the bonhomie is expected to be spontaneous and marked.]

नृप समीप सोहहिं सुत चारी । जनु धन धरमादिक तनुधारी ॥ २ ॥

nr̥pa samīpa sōhahim̐ suta cārī. janu dhana dharamādika tanudhārī. 2.

The four brothers (Lord Ram and his three younger brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) looked so marvelous near (or in the company of) the king (Dasrath) that they resembled personified forms of the four fruits (rewards) that one gets by leading a life of of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety. These four legendary fruits are ‘Artha’ (material and financial well-being), ‘Dharma’ (acclaim that comes with being able to lead an auspicious and righteous life), ‘Kaam’ (fulfillment of all desires), and ‘Moksha’ (liberation and deliverance from all sufferings associated with this world and one’s body). (2)

[Note—Here, the reference is to king Dasrath who has been rewarded with these four fruits for all the meritorious deeds he had done in his lifetime. The king was very blessed to have the four brothers as his son.

Remember: Lord Ram was not an ordinary ‘human son’ of a king; he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation. Dasrath had done severe Tapa (penance) and had requested the Lord to become his son because he wished to express his love, affection and devotion for the Lord more closely than anyone else could, and it is only possible if the Lord could live in close proximity with the king and be at his beck and call like a son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 149.

Now, let us see what the four brothers stood for—(i) Shatrughan stood for ‘Artha’; (ii) Bharat stood for ‘Dharma’; (iii) Laxman stood for ‘Kaam’; and (iv) Lord Ram himself for ‘Moksha’.

Shatrughan managed the affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya so well and with great finasse during the period of absence of Lord Ram when he had gone to live for 14 years in the forest to honour the word of his father king Dasrath, and Bharat, who was supposed to take over the reigns of the kingdom during the Lord’s absence, was so remorseful and full of guilt that he bluntly refused to accept the crown and spent the entire period of 14 long years as a reclusive hermit on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya, that there was no dint in the prosperity and wealth of the kingdom during this period. Rather, when Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya at the end of the exile period he found that everything was absolutely fine and well-looked after, and that the legendary power and majesty of the kingdom was maintained in perfect order by Shatrughan during the Lord’s absence. This simply means that Shatrughan was an expert administrator and excellent in handling the finances of the kingdom. Therefore he stood for the virtue of ‘Artha’—financial well-being and meaningful management of the affairs of one’s daily life.

Then we come to Bharat. He epitomised the virtues of ‘Dharma’ for the simple, obvious and straightforward reason that he refused to accept the crown of Ayodhya and its attendant attractions and benefits because it would have been an unrighteous, improper and unjust thing to do as the crown should have passed to his elder brother, Lord Ram, upon the death of their father, king Dasrath. Instead of this, unfortunately, Lord Ram had been sent to forest exile due to selfishness, ulterior motives and evil mechanisms of his own mother, Kaikeyi. In spite of all the efforts of the ministers of the kingdom, even his Guru sage Vaishistha and mother of Lord Ram, Kaushalya, who had tried their best to persuade him to accept the crown of the kingdom, Bharat flatly refused, citing it to be a highly improper thing to do—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Doha no. 183.

Not only did he rescind the crown, but Bharat had also gone a step further by spending the next 14 years in self-imposed exile by living like a hermit on the outskirts of Ayodhya, and renouncing all comforts of the kingdom—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Sortha/Doha no. 326.

Laxman stood for ‘Kaam’ (meaning wish fulfilment) because he had always stood by Lord Ram and helped him, shoulder-to-shoulder and arm-in-arm, to help the Lord fulfill all his objectives in this world. To cite a few examples: (i) During the protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, while Lord Ram had dealt with the chief of the demon army, i.e. Subahu and Marich, it was Laxman who had killed the rest of the demon forces—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 210. (ii) Another instance is during the war at Lanka it was Laxman who had slayed Meghanad, the invincible son of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 76.

It ought to be noted here that Laxman’s contribution in Lord Ram’s divine mission on earth has been acknowledged by the Lord himself when Laxman lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka and the Lord had grieved for him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-18 that precede Doha no. 61.

And finally we come to Lord Ram himself. There is no doubting the assertion that the Lord stood for the fruit of ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation of the creature. The holy name of the Lord, i.e. the word ‘RAM’, is deemed to be a “Tarak Mantra”, a divine mystical formula that helps the soul to cross over this mundane world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death. This fact is endorsed by the holiest of Hindu scriptures, i.e. the

‘Upanishads’ themselves. Refer: Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1; Canto 4, verse no. 7; and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-29.

The access to the ‘four fruits or rewards’ by king Dasrath as well as his queens who were blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of the world as their son known as Lord Ram has been referred to elsewhere also in the context of Lord Ram’s marriage in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos. 325 and 345.]

सुतन्ह समेत दसरथहि देखी । मुदित नगर नर नारि बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥

sutanha samēta dasarathahi dēkhī. mudita nagara nara nāri bisēṣī. 3.

When the citizens of the city¹, both the males as well as the females, saw the king along with his four sons, all of them were exceptionally delighted and felt very happy. (3)

[Note—¹Now, it is not clear which city and its inhabitants are being referred to here in this verse—is it Ayodhya or is it Janakpur?

Well, the answer is: ‘both of them’. The citizens of Ayodhya were in the marriage party itself, while the citizens of Janakpur consisted of those who were sent by king Janak to welcome the party on the outskirts of the city, as well as those who were waiting eagerly to receive the party in the city itself.

The citizens of Janakpur were specially very happy and delighted because till this moment they had known only the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, but now they saw that they were four brothers. Incidentally, Janak himself had two daughters, and his younger brother also had two daughters, bringing the number of eligible brides to four. The fascinated citizens visualized and hoped that all these four daughters would be married to the four brothers. Obviously it is a rare occasion when such a coincidence would occur. So this made them exceptionally delighted and happy.

The same thing can be applied to the citizens of Ayodhya. When they learnt that there were four princesses of marriageable age at Janakpur they wondered how nice would it be if all the four brothers could marry these four princesses? How wonderful and marvelous would it be to see the four couples getting married together under the same canopy, on the same dais, sitting in a row observing the rituals of the marriage ceremony together! The very idea made the citizens of the two cities ecstatic with joy.]

सुमन बरिसि सुर हनहिं निसाना । नाकनटीं नाचहिं करि गाना ॥ ४ ॥

sumana barisi sura hanahim nisānā. nākanaṭīṁ nācahim kari gānā. 4.

When the gods saw this wonderful sight, they liberally showered flowers (from the sky, the heaven) and merrily played their kettle-drums enthusiastically even as the celestial dancers (i.e. the Apsaras; heavenly nymphs) danced in gay abundance to the accompaniment of melodious songs. (4)

सतानंद अरु बिप्र सचिव गन । मागध सूत बिदुष बंदीजन ॥ ५ ॥

सहित बरात राउ सनमाना । आयसु मागि फिरे अगवाना ॥ ६ ॥

satānanda aru bipra saciva gana. māgadha sūta biduṣa bandījana. 5.
sahita barāta rā'u sanamānā. āyasu māgi phirē agavānā. 6.

Satanand (the royal priest of Janakpur), along with the Brahmins, the ministers, the minstrels, the bards and other wise men of the royal court of Janakpur who had been deputed by king Janak to receive the marriage party and extend a warm welcome to it, offered their greatest respect and heartiest welcome to king Dasrath and all other esteemed members of the party.

After paying their formal obeisance and extending a warm reception to the bridegroom's party, the members of Janak's delegation sought a polite permission from the honourable guests and returned back to the city. (5-6)

[Note—It is a tradition that the father of the bride would not go personally to meet the father of the groom upon the latter's arrival at the bride's place, but instead sends his emissary to receive and welcome the guests. Usually the priest of the bride's family is sent to represent the father of the bride at the head of the delegation that goes to meet the father of the groom and his companions.

Hence, Janak had sent Satanand as the head of the welcoming party that was sent to receive king Dasrath on the outskirts of Janakpur.

As we have already read earlier, they carried a lot of gifts with them as offerings to king Dasrath and other members of the entourage, and king Dasrath had graciously accepted everything as a token of his endorsement of this alliance between the two powerful kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 306.]

प्रथम बरात लगन तें आई । तातें पुर प्रमोदु अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥

ब्रह्मानंदु लोग सब लहहीं । बढहुँ दिवस निसि बिधि सन कहहीं ॥ ८ ॥

prathama barāta lagana tēm ā'ī. tātēm pura pramōdu adhikā'ī. 7.
brahmānandu lōga saba lahaḥīm. baṛhahum' divasa nisi bidhi sana kahahīm. 8.

Since the bridegroom's party had arrived well ahead of the day fixed for the marriage (of Lord Ram with Sita), there was great joy and rejoicing in the city (of Janakpur).

[This is because the citizens would have more time in their hands to celebrate, rejoice, and enjoy the festivities that were organised on this auspicious occasion. There was no rush for time; things could be taken in a relaxed manner. The citizens would have ample time to strike a person rapport with the guests and forge relationships that would come in handy for future contacts, be it for trade and commerce, sport, defense, education, social exchanges such as tourism and mutual friendship, or for establishing matrimonial alliances that would unite families and clans together.] (7)

The very thought (that there would be an extended stay of the marriage party and a lot of days to look forward for festivities and ceremonies), all the people were exceedingly exhilarated as if they have attained Brahm (i.e. as if they have obtained the highest degree of joy, bliss and happiness that is experienced by an ascetic when he has attained self-realisation).

They prayed to Vidhi (the Creator) that the days may be long and stretch to infinity (so that they may enjoy the wonderful time all the more)¹. (8)

[Note—¹The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 196 where it is said that at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers, the days of rejoicing and merriment seemed to stretch to eternity, and there was no sight of night.]

दो०. रामु सीय सोभा अवधि सुकृत अवधि दोउ राज ।
जहँ तहँ पुरजन कहहिं अस मिलि नर नारि समाज ॥ ३०९ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu sīya sōbhā avadhi sukr̥ta avadhi dō'u rāja.
jaham̐ taham̐ purajana kahahim̐ asa mili nara nāri samāja. 309.

The citizens (of Janakpur and Ayodhya) collect here and there in (separate) groups of men and women, discussing the events among themselves and asserting that there is no comparison in the world for the beautiful image consisting of the pair of Lord Ram and Sita on the one hand, and of the majesty and grandeur of the two great kings (Dasrath of Ayodhya, and Janak of Janakpur) on the other hand¹. (Doha no. 309)

[Note—¹The reason for this assertion is given below in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 310.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/104, stanza no. 3 also.]

चौ०. जनक सुकृत मूरति बैदेही । दसरथ सुकृत रामु धरें देही ॥ १ ॥
इन्ह सम काहुँ न सिव अवराधे । काहुँ न इन्ह समान फल लाधे ॥ २ ॥
इन्ह सम कोउ न भयउ जग माहीं । है नहिं कतहुँ होनेउ नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

janaka sukr̥ta mūrati baidēhī. dasaratha sukr̥ta rāmu dharēm̐ dēhī. 1.
inha sama kāhum̐ na siva avarādhē. kāhum̐ na inha samāna phala lādhē. 2.
inha sama kō'u na bhaya'u jaga māhīm̐. hai nahim̐ katahūm̐ hōnē'u nāhīm̐. 3.

All the good, auspicious, righteous and meritorious deeds done by king Janak in his lifetime have taken a personified form as Sita (his daughter), and likewise Lord Ram is an image of all the good, auspicious, meritorious and righteous deeds done by king Dasrath¹.

(1)

No one has worshipped and pleased Lord Shiva more than have these two kings, nor has anyone else been rewarded more than them². (2)

Verily it is true and irrefutably certain that there has never been anyone anywhere in the world in the past who can be said to be as fortunate and privileged as these two kings, nor is there anyone in the present time, or would be in the future³. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 325; and (b) Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172; and (ii) Doha no. 173 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309 that says that the four sons of king Dasrath appeared like a personified form of the four rewards of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha that Dasrath has been rewarded with. As regards Sita, it has been expressly stated in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas that Sita is the personified form of 'Yogmaya', the cosmic Shakti or dynamic powers of the Supreme Lord of creation, who has taken birth in the household of Janak. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 28; (ii) Canto 4, verse no. 18; and (iii) Canto 6, verse nos. 58-70.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294.]

हम सब सकल सुकृत कै रासी । भए जग जनमि जनकपुर बासी ॥ ४ ॥
जिन्ह जानकी राम छबि देखी । को सुकृती हम सरिस बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
पुनि देखब रघुबीर बिआहू । लेब भली बिधि लोचन लाहू ॥ ६ ॥

hama saba sakala sukr̥ta kai rāsī. bha'e jaga janami janakapura bāsī. 4.
jinha jānakī rāma chabi dēkhī. kō sukr̥tī hama sarisa bisēṣī. 5.
puni dēkhaba raghubīra bi'āhū. lēba bhalī bidhi lōcana lāhū. 6.

The citizens of Janakpur consider themselves very fortunate and privileged themselves (like their king Janak, as well as king Dasrath of Ayodhya). They thanked their good luck and affirmed—'We, the citizens of Janakpur, are like a treasury of accumulated good and meritorious deeds because we have been fortunate to take birth as citizens of Janakpur. [It is due to this good fortune that we have been able to enjoy these happy moments in our lives.] (4)

Say, who else is more fortunate and privileged in this world than us who have seen with our eyes the magnificent and divine image of Janki (Sita) and Lord Ram. (5)

We will get the full benefit of having our eyesight when we would be personally witnessing and enjoying the happy and auspicious event of the marriage of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita.' (6)

[Note—The citizens were thoroughly enjoying themselves, considered themselves very fortunate, and enthusiastically looked forward for the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita. They were of a unanimous view that no one is as lucky as them in this world that day.

They thanked their good luck and felt highly elated, saying—'There are countless kingdoms and millions of citizens living in them, but none of them have this reward today, none have this privilege today of participating in the rarest of rare event when the personified form of the Supreme Lord of this world is getting united with his divine Shakti in the form of Sita. So we regard ourselves especially blessed and fortunate in every respect. Our eyes have enabled us to see the divine image of Lord Ram and Sita, and also would enable us to watch their marriage soon. What more or greater reward can one expect by way of having eyesight?

At present we have been able to have only fleeting instances when we were able to see the divine image of Lord Ram and Sita. We have seen them separately—we have

seen Lord Ram when he came to visit the city along with his brother Laxman upon their arrival at Janakpur, and we have seen Sita only a few times when she stepped out of the palace. Then we had seen them at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, but it was a somber occasion when there was a lot of uncertainty and tension in the air.

The only time we saw Lord Ram and Sita together was when she had gone to put the victory garland on Lord Ram after he had broken the bow and sealed his marriage with her. But this magnificent sight was short-lived because an angry sage Parashuram had arrived and created a ruckus. Our enjoyments were cut short. We also could not thoroughly enjoy ourselves because we had to watch the couple from our viewers' gallery in the arena, and we could not come close and interact with them.

The situation would be different during the marriage ceremony when there would be an informal atmosphere marked by merry-making, festivities, celebrations and bonhomie when there would be no barriers of formalities and artificial distances created by social hierarchy. There would be close interactions and an informal atmosphere that would enable us to get up close to Lord Ram and Sita on one pretext or the other, such as to bless them ourselves on this auspicious occasion, and seek their blessings in return.']

कहहिं परसपर कोकिलबयनीं । एहि बिआहँ बड़ लाभु सुनयनीं ॥ ७ ॥
बड़ें भाग बिधि बात बनाई । नयन अतिथि होइहहिं दोउ भाई ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim parasapara kōkilabayanīm. ēhi bi'āham̐ bara lābhu sunayanīm. 7.
baṛēm bhāga bidhi bāta banāī. nayana atithi hō'ihahim dō'u bhāī. 8.

Ladies who had voices as sweet as the cuckoo spoke to each other—'Oh beautiful-eyed friends! There is great benefit and huge reward for us in this marriage (or union of Lord Ram with Sita)¹. (7)

The Creator has been very gracious and magnanimous upon us that he has turned the events in such a way that we have been able to have the two brothers as guests of our eyes. [That is, we will be able to invite them and serve them in the best way we can in a symbolic way by watching them closely and intensely, and to the full satisfaction of our hearts and minds. The two brothers are the honoured guests of our kingdom, and while our king Janak is doing his own very best to serve them externally in physical terms, we can do our bit by serving them subtly in a symbolic manner in our hearts.] (8)

[Note—¹What is the reward or benefit that the ladies are speaking of here? Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223 wherein the ladies of Janakpur have expressed their heart-felt desire to see Lord Ram as a groom of Sita so that they will have repeated opportunity to see their Lord again and again in their lives for the simple reason that then he would be paying visits to the city as it would be his in-law's place in future.

On the other hand, if Sita is married to someone else then the two brothers would go away to their kingdom at the end of the bow-breaking ceremony like the rest of the invited guests, and the ladies would never have a chance to see and interact with the Lord anytime again in their lives.]

दो०. बारहिं बार सनेह बस जनक बोलाउब सीय ।
लेन आइहहिं बंधु दोउ कोटि काम कमनीय ॥ ३१० ॥

dōhā.

bārahiṁ bāra sanēha basa janaka bōlā'uba sīya.
lēna ā'ihahiṁ bandhu dō'u kōṭi kāma kamanīya. 310.

The ladies were submerged in a pleasant reverie, dreaming that king Janak would repeatedly call Sita back (because he would be overwhelmed by affection and grief of separation from her at the time of the departure of the marriage party for Ayodhya, accompanied by the newly wed couple, Lord Ram and Sita), and each time the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) would come back to request him to let Sita go with them. (Doha no. 310)

[Note—The charmed ladies were imagining that they would be able to see Lord Ram and Laxman again and again at the time of their departure for Ayodhya at the end of the marriage celebrations because Janak would be so overwhelmed with love and affection that he would be repeatedly calling Sita back to meet her one last time, and would like to spend as much last minutes with her as he possibly could do, forcing Lord Ram and Laxman to come back and asking the king to let Sita go as it was getting late for departure, and they have a long journey to cover on their way back to their kingdom of Ayodhya.

In the process, the ladies who were overwhelmed with affection for the Lord, closed their eyes and dreamt that they would have one extra and additional opportunity to see their beloved Lord for one last time more.]

चौ०. बिबिध भाँति होइहि पहुनाई । प्रिय न काहि अस सासुर माई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bibidha bhāmṭi hō'ihī pahunāī. priya na kāhi asa sāsura māī. 1.

[The ladies of the city of Janakpur, overwhelmed with affection for Lord Ram and Laxman, were elated at the possibility of having an extended opportunity to interact with the two brothers when they would willingly like to stay longer at Janakpur than is customary for a groom's party so as to enjoy the elaborate, extensive and cordial hospitality that would be shown to them by the bride's side. They discussed this possibility and its rewards amongst themselves as follows—]

‘The groom and his marriage party would be shown elaborate hospitality of every imaginable kind by the hosts, the bride's side. Say, who would not like this pampering; who would not like to have such a caring, doting and affectionate father-in-law and mother-in-law? (1)

[Note—In other words, king Janak and his queen Sunayana would shower their love and affection upon their son-in-law Lord Ram so much that the latter would feel pampered and spoiled by their attention and care. The Lord would feel that they love him more than his own father, king Dasrath so much so that he (Lord Ram) would prefer to stay as long as it is practically possible at Janakpur so as to enjoy this privileged treatment and honour as much as he can. The result would be that he would be in no hurry to return to

Ayodhya, thereby giving the citizens of Janakpur more time to spend in his august company.]

तब तब राम लखनहि निहारी । होइहहिं सब पुर लोग सुखारी ॥ २ ॥

taba taba rāma lakhanahi nihārī. hō'ihahim saba pura lōga sukhārī. 2.

On all such occasions (when Lord Ram would seek Janak's permission to go back to Ayodhya, and would be lovingly requested by Janak to postpone the departure for some more days), all the citizens of Janakpur would feel very happy and delighted to see Lord Ram and Laxman. (2)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman and the rest of the marriage party would have prepared themselves to start on their journey back to Ayodhya. They would have assembled at a public place before their departure, and the two brothers would go to Janak to say good-bye to him and seek his blessings. As this news would spread in the city, all the people would hurry out and come to have a last glimpse of the Lord, before his departure. They would be craning their necks and jostling with each other to have a close-up view of the two brothers, and if possible have a brief chat with him to bid him farewell.

But then they imagined that the king (Janak) would not give Lord Ram permission to leave, but would rather politely and most pleadingly ask him to stay for some more time so that the desire of his heart to extend more of his love for the Lord can be realized. The merciful and compassionate Lord Ram would have no choice but to accept the king's request, and would return to his place of lodging, postponing his departure for some more days.

This cycle would be repeated again and again: the Lord seeking permission from Janak to leave, and Janak asking him to stay for some more days. Lord Ram would personally be very happy to find an excuse to stay as long as possible at Janakpur because of the warmth of hospitality and the intensity of affability and cordiality shown by Janak and the rest of the citizens to him. Janak's request would be the perfect excuse for Ram to keep on postponing his departure from Janakpur.

This is what the ladies, and for that matter everyone else in Janakpur were hoping for as is evident in these verses.]

सखि जस राम लखन कर जोटा । तैसेइ भूप संग दुइ ढोटा ॥ ३ ॥

स्याम गौर सब अंग सुहाए । ते सब कहहिं देखि जे आए ॥ ४ ॥

sakhi jasa rāma lakhana kara jōṭā. taisē'i bhūpa saṅga du'i ḍhōṭā. 3.
syāma gaura saba aṅga suhā'ē. tē saba kahahim dēkhi jē ā'ē. 4.

Oh friend! King Dasrath is accompanied by two other sons (Bharat and Shatrughan) who are exactly like Lord Ram and Laxman. (3)

Those who have gone to see them (a reference to the delegation sent by Janak to welcome the marriage party when it arrived on the outskirts of the city, as well as the huge crowd of citizens who had rushed to have a first-hand glimpse of the party as it entered the city with full royal regalia and proceeded towards the place designated for their stay at Janakpur) have come back and reported that these two sons are of dark and

fair complexion respectively, and have a physique and personality that are charming and attractive in all possible manner¹. (4)

[Note—¹The same observation was made by these citizens for Lord Ram and Laxman earlier—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 220, and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221.]

कहा एक मैं आजु निहारे । जनु बिरंचि निज हाथ सँवारे ॥ ५ ॥

kahā ēka mair̥m āju nihārē. janu biran̄ci nija hātha sam̄vārē. 5.

While the enthused ladies were having this lively discussion, one of them said—‘I have seen them personally today. Surely it appears that the Creator known as ‘Vidhi’ has moulded them personally with his own hands.

[That is, the Creator took special interest and care to mould their bodies and inject exceptional charm and beauty in them. He did not create them in a run-of-mill routine sort of way, but took pains to use all his craftsmanship to give shape to their handsome personality and charming physique because the Creator wished to use them as a sample case to exhibit his expertise and skills as the supreme Craftsman.] (5)

भरतु रामही की अनुहारी । सहसा लखि न सकहिं नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

लखनु सत्रुसूदनु एकरूपा । नख सिख ते सब अंग अनूपा ॥ ७ ॥

bharatu rāmahī kī anuhārī. sahasā lakhi na sakahim̄ nara nārī. 6.

lakhanu satrusūdanu ēkarūpā. nakha sikha tē saba aṅga anūpā. 7.

Bharat is an exact replica of Lord Ram so much so that no man or woman would easily be able to distinguish between the two. (6)

Similarly, Laxman and Shatrughan (also known as Shatrusudan) are exactly like each other to look at.

All the four have perfectly charming physique, right from the tip of their toes up to the top of their heads¹. (7)

[Note—¹How pleasant is the personalities of all the four brothers who form two pairs resembling each other in every fine manner is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.]

मन भावहिं मुख बरनि न जाहीं । उपमा कहूँ त्रिभुवन कोउ नाही ॥ ८ ॥

mana bhāvahim̄ mukha barani na jāhīm̄. upamā kahum̄ tribhuvana kō'u nāhīm̄. 8.

The four brothers are so exceptionally attractive and charming to behold that though one's Mana (the heart and the mind) is enthralled and captivated by their view, it is not possible for one to describe them in words (because the words have their own limitations and they cannot do justice to the magnificence of the sight that one beholds before him).

Verily it can be said with surety that there is no one in the entire world known as 'Tribhuvan' (i.e. the world consisting of three levels or dimensions of existence)¹ with whom any comparison, even a remotest one, can be made or even imagined with these four brothers. (8)

[Note—¹The 'Tribhuvan' refers to the entire stretch of the living hospitable world. It consists of the heaven where the exalted gods live, the earth where ordinary creatures live, and the nether world where lower levels of life exist. It also refers to the past, the present and the future.]

छं०. उपमा न कोउ कह दास तुलसी कतहुँ कबि कोबिद कहैं । १ ।
बल बिनय बिद्या सील सोभा सिंधु इन्ह से एड़ अहैं ॥ २ ॥
पुर नारि सकल पसारि अंचल बिधिहि बचन सुनावहीं । ३ ।
ब्याहिअहुँ चारिउ भाइ एहिं पुर हम सुमंगल गावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

upamā na kō'u kaha dāsa tulasī katahum' kabi kōbida kahaim. 1.
bala binaya bidyā sīla sōbhā sindhu inha sē ē'i ahaim. 2.
pura nāri sakala pasāri aṇcala bidhihi bacana sunāvahīm. 3.
byāhi'ahum' cāri'u bhā'i ēhim pura hama sumaṅgala gāvahīm. 4.

Poet Tulsidas (the narrator of this epic Ram Charit Manas), who is a humble servant of Lord Ram, asserts that even expert poets and wise men declare that there is no one with whom the four brothers can be ever compared.

All the virtues and qualities that they possess, such as strength and valour, politeness and etiquette, knowledge, skills and wisdom, courteousness and good manners, as well as beauty and charm, are unique and exclusive to them. They cannot be compared with anyone else with respect to this glorious virtues and qualities. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

All the women-folk of Janakpur spread out their garments before the Creator (just like a beggar would extend his hands and begging bowl to seek alms from a magnanimous donor) and pray to him most earnestly with these words—'Oh dear Creator (Vidhi)! Let the four brothers be married here in Janakpur so that we can have a rare opportunity to sing auspicious songs to celebrate the event.'¹ (Chanda nos. 3-4)

[Note--¹Till this point of time when the party had arrived from Ayodhya, the women-folk of Janakpur had seen only Lord Ram and Laxman. So they had prayed to the Creator that Lord Ram should marry Sita and become a royal groom of Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

But now that they have seen all the four noble princes, they long to see all of them married at Janakpur to the four princesses of the kingdom.

It will be pertinent to note here that their love for the Lord was so real and honest that the Creator could not defy their prayers and longings because finally it so happened that this wish of the citizens was granted—i.e. all the four brothers were indeed married to four princesses of Janakpur, viz. Sita and her sister who were daughters of king Janak, and her two cousins who were daughters of her uncle, the younger brother of Janak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 325.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", Chanda no. 19.]

सो०. कहहिं परस्पर नारि बारि बिलोचन पुलक तन ।
सखि सबु करब पुरारि पुन्य पयोनिधि भूप दोउ ॥ ३११ ॥

sōraṭhā.

kahahim paraspara nāri bāri bilōcana pulaka tana.
sakhi sabu karaba purāri pun'ya payōnidhi bhūpa dō'u. 311.

Tears of affection welled-up in the eyes of all the ladies, and their bodies were thrilled. They reassured each other, saying—'Oh friend, have courage and faith. Purari (Lord Shiva) will fulfill our wishes¹, because both the kings (Dasrath and Janak, the fathers of Lord Ram and Sita respectively) are like deep oceans of meritorious deeds (and their natural blessings, or the good fortunes that accompany such deeds)².' (Sortha/Doha no. 311)

[Note—Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", Chanda no. 19.]

¹Lord Shiva was the patron deity of both the kingdoms, Ayodhya as well as Janakpur. Lord Ram has clearly stated the importance and paramount nature of Lord Shiva while consecrating the Shiva Lingam (an image of Shiva) before he launched his campaign to liberate Sita from the clutches of the demon king of Lanka, Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Further, after returning from his forest exile and assuming the crown of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established millions (i.e. countless) of Shiva Lingams throughout the kingdom. This fact is specifically mentioned in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 27, line no. 1.

As for king Janak, the very fact that Lord Shiva had chosen his ancestors for the safekeeping of his bow which was duly worshipped by the royal family of Janakpur ever since then, and then allowing it to be got broken and not getting angry or feeling insulted by this otherwise despicable act so that Janak's daughter Sita could be married to Lord Ram are sufficient evidences of the Lord's grace upon the kingdom of Janakpur and its blessed king Janak. Refer: (a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 16, 69-79; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; as well as Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and the following Chanda that precede Doha no. 261.

Now therefore, Lord Shiva would not want to do anything which would go against the wishes of these two noble kings, even if such fulfillment may not look too convenient for other devotees of Lord Shiva and they may take it as an affront to their worshipped deity, Lord Shiva, as is evident when sage Parashuram, an ardent devotee of the Lord, became extremely angry and wanted to punish Lord Ram for breaking the bow of his revered Lord, Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 293.

²Since both the kings have led a life of righteousness and auspiciousness, it is certain that Lord Shiva would fulfill their wishes. Obviously for Dasrath it would be to see all his four sons married as soon as possible as any father would naturally want, and what better chance would he get than to see them married with the princesses of Janakpur because

this kingdom is as renowned, well-established and prosperous as his own kingdom of Ayodhya. Besides this fact, the princesses of this kingdom are of extreme beauty and of the right marriageable age to suit his four sons.

The two kings being 'like an ocean of good deeds and its attendant blessings' is a metaphoric way of stressing that like the ocean being a fathomless reservoir of water, the good and meritorious deeds of these two kings were also countless and so were the good affects of these deeds.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि सकल मनोरथ करहीं । आनंद उमगि उमगि उर भरहीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi sakala manōratha karahīm. ānamāda umagi umagi ura bharahīm. 1.

In this way, all the women-folk prayed to the Lord for fulfillment of their hearts' innermost desires. This thought and the hope of its certain realization overwhelmed them and inundated their heart and inner-being. (1)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255.

These above cited instances are clear indications of how intense were the desire of all the citizens of Janakpur, not only the women but the men as well, that Lord Ram should marry Sita at any cost, and for this all of them prayed to Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati.]

जे नृप सीय स्वयंवर आए । देखि बंधु सब तिन्ह सुख पाए ॥ २ ॥

कहत राम जसु बिसद बिसाला । निज निज भवन गए महिपाला ॥ ३ ॥

jē nr̥pa sīya svayambara ā'ē. dēkhi bandhu saba tinha sukha pā'ē. 2.

kahata rāma jasu bisada bisālā. nija nija bhavana ga'ē mahipālā. 3.

All those kings who had come to attend Sita's 'Swayambar' (i.e. the competition of breaking of the bow that was organized to decide who would marry her) felt joyful and happy¹ to see the brothers. [Here the term 'brothers' means all the four of them—viz. Lord Ram and his three younger siblings, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.] (2)

Talking about the stupendous glory and achievement of Lord Ram (with reference to the formidable feat of the breaking of Shiva's bow and overcoming the wrath of sage Parashuram), and singing his praises all the while, all the kings went back to their respective kingdoms. (3)

[Note—¹These kings were the good ones, those who had refrained from participating in the competition of breaking the bow. They had realized that Lord Ram was of the right age for the would-be bride, and that they themselves were much older than her and therefore unsuitable to marry her. Besides this, they had observed that a divine halo

exuded from the Lord, and that he had the blessings and patronage of a renowned sage Vishwamitra with whom the two brothers had come to Janakpur. Then they had also observed how special treatment was given to them by their host, king Janak. So in short they had wisely and prudently decided to stay away from trying to break the bow, and had instead attempted to dissuade other kings to follow their example. In the event as it happened, the greedy and haughty kings didn't listen to their advice and got humiliated in the process because none of them was able to as much as move the bow even an inch.

These failed kings then tried to create a ruckus and revolted, even preparing to stage a bloody showdown (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266). But when angry sage Parashuram intervened to seek retribution for the purported insult of Lord Shiva by breaking of the bow but was finally pacified by Lord Ram, these coward kings quietly slid away from the venue and left Janakpur to save their face, prestige and dignity (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285).

Therefore, those amongst the invited kings who had refrained from attempting to break the bow had no fear of suffering loss of prestige and honour, so they stayed back as guests of king Janak. Since they had no personal friendship with the kingdom of Ayodhya and its king Dasrath, once the latter arrived they felt it prudent now to leave and go back to their own kingdoms.

Another reason for their decision to return home was that now all the attention of king Janak was diverted to attend and look after the marriage party, and these kings did not wish to give an impression of being a burden on Janak by overstaying beyond a reasonable time. That would be impolite and un-royal behaviour. Overstaying guests are not regarded with great respect, and beyond a certain time they become unwelcome and irritating even in modern days. So these wise and noble kings did not want to embarrass Janak, and left on their own accord.]

गए बीति कछु दिन एहि भाँती । प्रमुदित पुरजन सकल बराती ॥ ४ ॥

ga'ē bīti kachu dina ēhi bhāmṭī. pramudita purajana sakala barāṭī. 4.

Some pleasant days passed in this way when both the members of the bridegroom's party as well as the citizens of Janakpur thoroughly enjoyed themselves and felt merry. (4)

[Note—The marriage party had arrived a number of days in advance of the day fixed for the marriage ceremony. So there was ample time for merriment and enjoyment. When one is happy and enjoying one's self, time seems to fly away and one does not seem to be bothered about the nitty-gritties of humdrum life.

A similar situation had prevailed at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197.

Again, it is stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280 that the citizens of Ayodhya who had accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot in an attempt to bring Lord Ram back from the forest had so thoroughly enjoyed their stay there that time flew away for them so fast that even a long time equivalent to seven Yugs (celestial eras of time) seemed to be as small as a minute.

Another instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 15 wherein it is described how the monkeys who had come to Ayodhya with Lord Ram when he returned to his capital after victory at Lanka were so thoroughly enjoying their time there that six months passed by and they did not realize that the days were passing away. For them, this long period of time seemed as if it was merely a single day.]

मंगल मूल लगन दिनु आवा । हिम रितु अगहनु मासु सुहावा ॥ ५ ॥

maṅgala mūla lagana dinu āvā. hima ritu agahanu māsu suhāvā. 5.

Finally, the auspicious day arrived when the wedding was to be solemnized. It was in the pleasant month of 'Agahan' (which is the ninth month according to the Hindu calendar, and is also known as 'Maarga-shirsha', corresponding to the English month of December), the month that marks the beginning of the cold (winter) season. (5)

ग्रह तिथि नखतु जोगु बर बारू । लगन सोधि बिधि कीन्ह बिचारू ॥ ६ ॥
पठै दीन्हि नारद सन सोई । गनी जनक के गनकन्ह जोई ॥ ७ ॥

graha tithi nakhatu jōgu bara bārū. lagana sōdhi bidhi kīnha bicārū. 6.
paṭhai dīnhi nārada sana sōī. ganī janaka kē ganakanha jōī. 7.

The Creator researched carefully and determined the most auspicious time and date when all the planets, asterisms, signs of the zodiac, and the constellation of stars and their individual members would be best placed and occupied the most beneficial place in the horoscope. (6)

Then the Creator sent sage Narad (his son and a famed celestial sage who had free access to heaven and earth) as his messenger who carried this message to Janak, who in his turn got it read and deciphered by his court astrologers and other wise men of the kingdom. (7)

[Note—The horoscope is in a coded form, and experts are needed to decode it and read the hidden message in it. Hence, the month of 'Agahan' and the actual time and day of the ceremonies and rituals were decided by the royal astrologers and horoscope readers of Janakpur.]

सुनी सकल लोगन्ह यह बाता । कहहिं जोतिषी आहिं बिधाता ॥ ८ ॥

sunī sakala lōganha yaha bātā. kahahim jōtiṣī āhim bidhātā. 8.

When the people heard of this news (that the time and date of the marriage ceremony was decided by none else but the Creator himself, they marveled at it and exclaimed in astonishment—'Say, the Creator has assumed the role of an astrologer!' (8)

[Note—The people rejoiced at the prospect that not only their wishes to see Lord Ram happily marrying Sita would be fulfilled now but that the couple will lead a happy married life because the time and date has been determined by the Creator himself. Since the Creator determines the destiny of all living beings, if he has selected a particular time and date for the union of Lord Ram and Sita, then no power of earth can ever disrupt it or cause any harm to this bond.

The next Doha no. 312 tells us about the exact time selected by the Creator for the performance of wedding rituals.]

दो०. धेनुधूरि बेला बिमल सकल सुमंगल मूल ।
बिप्रन्ह कहेउ बिदेह सन जानि सगुन अनुकूल ॥ ३१२ ॥

dōhā.

dhēnudhūri bēlā bimala sakala sumāṅgala mūla.
bipranha kahē'u bidēha sana jāni saguna anukūla. 312.

When the designated most auspicious hour arrived, the time of the evening that is just before sunset when cows return after grazing in the field and a lot of dust is raised from their hooves, the learned Brahmins realized that the moment has come, and so they said to Janak (as narrated below in the following verses). (Doha no. 312)

[Note—All preparations were ready; they were just waiting for the correct arrangement of stars and planets. The time was deciphered after reading the chart sent by the Creator through sage Narad as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 6-7.]

चौ०. उपरोहितहि कहेउ नरनाहा । अब बिलंब कर कारनु काहा ॥ १ ॥
सतानंद तब सचिव बोलाए । मंगल सकल साजि सब ल्याए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uparōhitahi kahē'u naranāhā. aba bilamba kara kāranu kāhā. 1.
satānanda taba saciva bōlā'ē. maṅgala sakala sāji saba lyā'ē. 2.

The king (Janak) asked his royal priest (Satanand), 'Say, what is the cause of delay now? [That is, why are you wasting time and not going ahead with the wedding rituals though the auspicious time determined for the ceremony has arrived? So, please start the process immediately.]' (1)

Hearing these instructions of the king, Satanand immediately summoned the senior ministers of the royal court who arrived with all the auspicious paraphernalia needed for the wedding rituals and their accompanying ceremonies¹. (2)

[Note—¹What were these paraphernalia and how were they brought to the platform where the marriage ritual was to be performed? The answer is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 which we shall be reading below soon.]

संख निसान पनव बहु बाजे । मंगल कलस सगुन सुभ साजे ॥ ३ ॥

saṅkha nisāna panava bahu bājē. maṅgala kalasa saguna subha sājē. 3.

As soon as it was known that the process of the wedding has been initiated, there was a spontaneous sounding of conches, drums and tabors¹. Accompanying them were displayed auspicious things such as pitchers (that are usually filled with curd or water from some holy river, and the mouth is covered with leaves of the mango tree on which is placed a coconut) and other articles that symbolise good omen². (3)

[Note—¹Whenever there was some good news, musical instruments were played and the conch was blown. In olden days when there were no radio and television, the loud sound of these musical instruments sort of alerted the citizens of the city that some good tiding has arrived, and it is time to celebrate and rejoice. Hearing these sounds, the people used to rush out of their homes and work-places to enquire about the reason why the musical instruments were played, and then the celebrations began. Similarly, when the city was attacked by an intruder or an enemy's army, the bugle was sounded to alert the people.

This sounding or playing of the musical instruments was spontaneous and done on the spur of the moment as the good news arrived. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 193 when king Dasrath has ordered that musical instruments be played as soon as he learnt that he has been blessed by four sons.

Again we see the same thing happening on other occasions as well. For instance, (i) When the news arrived in Ayodhya that Lord Ram was to be married with Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 296; (ii) When Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (iii) When Sita had put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 264.

²Earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304 that lists the auspicious and good omens which appeared when Lord Ram's marriage party departed from Ayodhya for Janakpur.]

सुभग सुआसिनि गावहिं गीता । करहिं बेद धुनि बिप्र पुनीता ॥ ४ ॥

subhaga su'āsini gāvahim gītā. karahim bēda dhuni bipra punītā. 4.

(Accompanying the playing of the musical instruments were the) Graceful women (whose husbands were alive; those who were not widows) sang melodious songs, while the learned Vipras (Brahmins) chanted the holy sacred hymns from the Vedas (the ancient scriptures). (4)

[Note—Refer similar events of singing and chanting of the hymns of the Vedas that occurred earlier in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 194, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 195 when Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 when Lord Ram had broken the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on him; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 297, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 301, as well as Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 297 when the good tidings of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita arrived at Ayodhya.]

लेन चले सादर एहि भाँती । गए जहाँ जनवास बराती ॥ ५ ॥
कोसलपति कर देखि समाजू । अति लघु लाग तिन्हहि सुरराजू ॥ ६ ॥

lēna calē sādara ēhi bhāmṭī. ga'ē jahām' janavāsa barātī. 5.
kōsalapati kara dēkhi samājū. ati laghu lāga tinhahi surarājū. 6.

In this way (i.e. accompanied by auspicious things such as the pitcher filled with curd or water besides other items of good omen, singing ladies, playing musical instruments, and Brahmins chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas), he (Satanand) along with other senior ministers of the royal court proceeded towards the place where the groom's party had been lodged. (5)

When he and others saw the majesty, the pomp, the grandeur and the magnificence of the king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) and his entourage, they felt that the royal court of the king of gods (Indra) would pale into insignificance when compared to the splendour of the court of Dasrath¹. (6)

[Note—¹A similar comparison is made elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 which describes the majesty of Janakpur; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 319 which describes the majesty of king Dasrath as compared to the majesty of Indra and other custodians of the world; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324 which describes the majesty of the kingdom of Ayodhya as compared to the kingdom of heaven.]

भयउ समउ अब धारिअ पाऊ । यह सुनि परा निसानहिं घाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
गुरहि पूछि करि कुल बिधि राजा । चले संग मुनि साधु समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

bhaya'u sama'u aba dhāri'a pā'ū. yaha suni parā nisānahim ghā'ū. 7.
gurahi pūchi kari kula bidhi rājā. calē saṅga muni sādhu samājā. 8.

All the members of the delegation led by Satanand, who were sent by king Janak to request king Dasrath to come to the venue of the marriage ceremony so that the rituals can started, submitted before the king, 'Oh respected King! The auspicious time has arrived, so please be kind to come forward and step into the venue where the marriage rituals are to be performed.'

As soon as this request was heard by the groom's party, musical instruments such as the kettle-drum etc. were sounded thunderously, with a lot of enthusiasm. (7)

The king (Dasrath) consulted and sought permission from his Guru (sage Vasistha), and after completing the traditional family rites ordained for such occasions, he cheerfully proceeded towards the venue of the marriage ceremony together with his royal entourage as well as his Guru and a host of other holy men and sages¹. (8)

[Note—¹The king's royal entourage consisted of his ministers, commanders of his army, senior citizens of Ayodhya as well as his attendants, while his Guru who accompanied him was surrounded by other sages and holy men.]

Whenever a great king moved out in public, this was the usual pattern of his royal procession. We observe it when king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra upon his

arrival at Janakpur along with Lord Ram and Laxman: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

Refer also to Janki Mangal, verse nos. 127-128; and Chanda no. 16 that follow these two verses.]

दो०. भाग्य बिभव अवधेस कर देखि देव ब्रह्मादि ।
लगे सराहन सहस मुख जानि जनम निज बादि ॥ ३१३ ॥

dōhā.

bhāgya bibhava avadhēsa kara dēkhi dēva brahmādi.
lagē sarāhana sahasa mukha jāni janama nija bādi. 313.

When the gods led by the creator Brahma and others observed the great luck, the good fortune, the glory and the magnificence of the king of Ayodhya, they began to praise him and extol his virtues with a thousand mouths. They considered themselves unlucky and their birth as fruitless (because they had merely enjoyed the comforts of heaven but had not been blessed enough to have such a close interaction with the Supreme Being as king Dasrath has had when the Lord took birth in his household as his son known as 'Ram' with whom the king played like a father would with his son and had spent a lot of time showering his undivided love and affection upon the Lord, a privilege that was denied to even the greatest of gods). (Doha no. 313)

चौ०. सुरन्ह सुमंगल अवसरु जाना । बरषहिं सुमन बजाइ निसाना ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

suranha sumāṅgala avasaru jānā. barāṣahim sumana bajā'i nisānā. 1.

The gods realised that it was a very auspicious occasion, and hence they celebrated it by raining flowers from the heaven and beating their musical drums. (1)

[Note—We note that this happens quite frequently whenever there is a happy occasion to celebrate and rejoice. Refer for instance the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand which tell us the occasions when the gods had showered flowers from the sky and played their musical instruments:—

(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 191; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 262; (iv) Doha no. 264; (v) Doha no. 285; (vi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 302; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (ix) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319; (x) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (xi) Doha no. 324 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 7; (xii) Chanda no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.]

सिव ब्रह्मादिक बिबुध बरूथा । चढ़े बिमानन्हि नाना जूथा ॥ २ ॥
 प्रेम पुलक तन हृदय उछाहू । चले बिलोकन राम बिआहू ॥ ३ ॥

siva brahmādika bibudha barūthā. caṛhē bimānanhi nānā jūthā. 2.
 prēma pulaka tana hṛdayam¹ uchāhū. calē bilōkana rāma bi'āhū. 3.

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma, as well as a host of other exalted gods mounted their aerial vehicles and proceeded with great enthusiasm and delight, euphoric and thrilled in their bodies thrilled with excitement and exhilaration, to witness the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram. (2-3)

[Note—These great gods were aware who Lord Ram actually was. They knew very well that he was not an ordinary human prince, but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as they themselves had prayed to the Lord to assume a human form to get rid of the demons who had been tyrannically tormenting the earth and its inhabitants, and destroying Dharma. The Lord had then obliged them and had told them that he will take birth as Lord Ram in the household of king Dasrath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187. So, when they got an opportunity to participate in the Lord's wedding, they felt ecstatic and privileged.

We note here that Lord Shiva and Brahma are mentioned, but Lord Vishnu is conspicuous by his name not being mentioned. The answer is obvious—Lord Vishnu is in the form of Lord Ram whose marriage these gods are going to attend.

Their bodies were thrilled and exhilarated because it was a rare occasion and auspicious as well when one is able to witness the union of two cosmic forces of creation—i.e. the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm' in the form of Lord Ram, and the 'Shakti' or dynamic cosmic powers of Brahm in the form of Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 361.]

देखि जनकपुर सुर अनुरागे । निज निज लोक सबहिं लघु लागे ॥ ४ ॥
 चितवहिं चकित बिचित्र बिताना । रचना सकल अलौकिक नाना ॥ ५ ॥

dēkhi janakapuru sura anurāgē. nija nija lōka sabahirṁ laghu lāgē. 4.
 citavahirṁ cakita bicitra bitānā. racanā sakala alaukika nānā. 5.

When the gods saw the majesty, magnificence and opulence of the city of Janakpur, all of them felt that their own cities in the kingdom of heaven literally paled into insignificance¹. (4)

Their looked in awe and were stunned at the strange and out-of-the-world beauty of the marriage pavilion. All the arrangements and paraphernalia they saw were exceptionally wonderful and fabulous². (5)

[Note—¹Janakpur was not an ordinary city; it was the place where the cosmic Shakti of the Supreme Being lived in a personified form as Sita. Besides this fact, king Janak was a highly enlightened and righteous king of his time, and if a king is noble then all the good fortunes and prosperity are ever eager to bless his kingdom and its subjects.

It ought to be noted here that when Lord Ram's marriage party had arrived from Ayodhya, Sita had instructed the 'Siddhis' (mystical powers that she possessed) to go and

serve the guests in the best possible way. These Siddhis can provide anything one wishes, and when they got a chance to serve Lord Ram and Sita, they felt honoured. Hence they went out of their way to decorate and deck-up the city to make it more glamorous than the city of Indra, the king of gods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.

Earlier we have already read that when Lord Ram had seen the natural beauty and magnificence of Janakpur when he arrived there with sage Vishwamitra, he too felt very happy and delighted at its sight. If anything can please the Lord then obviously it has to be of an excellent quality. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214.

²We shall read below that when Lord Shiva found that the gods were dazed at the stunning magnificence of Janakpur, he told them that they must understand that they have come to attend the union of the Supreme Lord whose name is so holy and powerful that by merely saying it a person can have access to anything he or she desires. So there is no miracle or wonder in the sight they are observing on earth in the form of the city of Janakpur. Refer: Doha no. 314 and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

Once again we have read earlier that when Lord Ram had gone to visit the city of Janakpur for the purpose of sight-seeing, he was astonished at the beauty and layout of the arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was to be held. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 225. Well, if its magnificence surprised the Lord who is the Master of the entire creation, the Lord of Nature, the beauty and diversity of which are beyond description and measure, then there is no wonder that it awed the gods who have a limited reach as compared to the Supreme Being.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320 specifically mention the glamour and magnificence of the pavilion where the wedding rituals were to be held.]

नगर नारि नर रूप निधाना । सुघर सुधरम सुसील सुजाना ॥ ६ ॥

तिन्हहि देखि सब सुर सुरनारीं । भए नखत जनु बिधु उजिआरीं ॥ ७ ॥

nagara nāri nara rūpa nidhānā. sughara sudharama susīla sujānā. 6.
tinahahi dēkhi saba sura suranārīṁ. bha'ē nakhata janu bidhu uji'ārīṁ. 7.

The citizens of the city of Janakpur, both the males as well as the females, were very handsome and attractive to look at as if they were like treasures of physical beauty and glamour. They lived in auspicious homes, followed the right path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct), were courteous, cultured, amiable and wise¹. (6)

When the gods and their consorts saw them and sub-consciously compared them with themselves, all of them felt subdued just like the stars are in the presence of the light of the sun². (7)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier in the comment appended to verse nos. 4-5 herein above, when their king, Janak, was of a high stature and so blessed that Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, had taken the form of Sita to become his daughter, nothing short of the best and the most excellent can be expected from either the city where Janak lived, or its residents.

We shall be shortly reading below that countless gods and goddesses had assumed human forms and joined the citizens of Janakpur to rejoice and take part in the

celebrations. When these gods and goddesses assumed human forms then naturally their forms must have been most attractive and divine to behold. They had mingled with the rest of the inhabitants of the city so much so that it was impossible to distinguish between who were actually humans on the one hand, and who were gods and goddesses in human forms on the other hand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 318.

Not only Janakpur, even the city of Ayodhya was more divine than the city of gods in heaven so much so that the goddess of speech, goddess Saraswati, and the thousand hooded serpent known as Seshnath could not describe its beauty and magnificence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195.

²The stars pale into insignificance as soon as the light of the sun floods the sky. All their pride of being glittering gems in the night sky vanish in the presence of the sun's light. Likewise, these gods and their consorts had been pride that they possessed divine bodies that did not grow old, showed signs of aging or disease, were handsome and attractive to look at, wore magnificent clothes and ornaments as depicted in Hindu iconography, etc. But when they saw the citizens of Janakpur, their pride and vanity were crushed as they observed that these humans were more likable and glamorous than they.]

बिधिहि भयउ आचरजु बिसेषी । निज करनी कछु कतहुँ न देखी ॥ ८ ॥

bidhihi bhaya'u ācaraju bisēṣī. nija karanī kachu katahum'na dēkhī. 8.

The Creator known as Vidhi was astonished to see such a wonderful and outlandish city of exceptional magnificence and beauty that he was dumbstruck. He did not see anything that could ever imagine he has created; he was astounded at the sight because what he beheld was beyond his imagination and creative capabilities. (8)

[Note—This verse shows that the city of Janakpur was so perfect to look at that the Creator was astounded because everything he had created had some or the other flaw; nothing that he created was either perfect or so stunningly beautiful.]

दो०. सिवँ समुझाए देव सब जनि आचरज भुलाहु ।
हृदयँ बिचारहु धीर धरि सिय रघुबीर बिआहु ॥ ३१४ ॥

dōhā.

sivam' samujhā'ē dēva saba jani ācaraja bhulāhu.
hr̥dayam' bicārahu dhīra dhari siya raghubīra bi'āhu. 314.

When Lord Shiva (who was the wisest amongst them all, and who knew the supreme Truth of Lord Ram as a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being) observed that the gods were in a state of dazed stupor, he advised them not to be astonished and get lost in wonderment. He told them to think deeply in their hearts, to contemplate and realize whose marriage they have come to attend. It was the divine union of Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being who is the Lord of creation) and Sita (the personified form of the Shakti of the Lord). So they must become calm and not lose a grip on their senses. (Doha no. 314)

[Note—Lord Shiva reminded the gods of the earlier events when they had approached him to advise where to find Lord Vishnu so that they can plead with the Lord to protect them against the cruelty and tyranny unleashed by the demons. Shiva had told them to pray to Lord Vishnu at the place they were standing, and there was no need to go search the Lord anywhere as he manifests himself anywhere the devotee earnestly prays to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 185 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The gods had prayed fervently to Lord Vishnu who revealed himself before them and promised that he will manifest himself as Lord Ram on this earth to fulfill their wishes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

Hence, Lord Shiva wisely reminded the gods of this event and alerted them to be careful and not get lost in a mirage created by the Lord's Maya Shakti, the magical powers of the Lord to create illusions. Instead, they should understand the truth and rejoice that they are privileged to take part in this celebration.

The gods were deluded by the physical world they saw because their knowledge is very limited. But Lord Shiva is a wise god who is regarded as the most enlightened and realized one in the entire pantheon of gods. Shiva always remained submerged in doing meditation, and he is the Lord with 'three eyes'—the third eye symbolising knowledge of the subtlest truth and reality of creation, a knowledge that escapes others. Lord Shiva is the one who has realized the true nature of the 'Self', the Truth of creation. He knows that the true essence of Lord Ram is not his gross body as the prince of Ayodhya, but as the Holy Spirit who had assumed a divine body to give joy to the creatures of this mortal world by living amongst them as one of them. See the verses that follow herein below.

What to talk of the gods, even Shiva's own consort, Parvati, got so deluded when she saw Lord Ram that in spite of Shiva's warning not to doubt him she decided to test the divine nature of Lord Ram, and had to pay an immense price for her delusions. This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60.]

चौ०. जिन्ह कर नामु लेत जग माहीं । सकल अमंगल मूल नसाहीं ॥ १ ॥
करतल होहिं पदारथ चारी । तेइ सिय रामु कहेउ कामारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jinha kara nāmu lēta jaga māhīm. sakala amaṅgala mūla nasāhīm. 1.
karatala hōhīm padāratha cārī. tē'i siya rāmu kahē'u kāmārī. 2.

Lord Shiva told the stunned gods—'Listen, oh gods! He whose name is so powerful, holy and divine that its mere utterance is enough to eliminate all evil, misfortunes and inauspiciousness from their very roots in this world [1], and one is able to have within one's easy grasp the four traditional rewards or fruits that one is entitled to for all good conduct and leading an auspicious and righteous life¹--verily, it is that supreme Lord whom you are all seeing in the form of Sri Ram, and Sita is the personified form of the divine Shakti (cosmic powers and authority) of that Lord [2].

[Hence, don't be surprised at or perplexed with what you behold and witness. This is not an ordinary prince or princess whose marriage you all have come to attend,

rather it is a rarest of rare opportunity for all of us to be a part of this auspicious gathering and be witnessing the union of the Holy Lord with his cosmic Shakti. It's a phenomenon which we will not get another opportunity to witness again. So stop wondering and enjoy the moment, because your knowledge and understanding of this endless creation is limited, and you cannot measure what is essentially measureless and beyond comprehension.] (1-2)

[Note—See a detailed note appended to Doha no. 314 herein above.

¹The four legendary rewards for meritorious life are the following—‘Artha’ or financial well-being, ‘Dharma’ or meritorious life, ‘Kaam’ or fulfilment of desires, and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation and deliverance from this world consisting of an endless cycle of pain and miseries associated with birth and death.]

एहि बिधि संभु सुरन्ह समुझावा । पुनि आगें बर बसह चलावा ॥ ३ ॥

ēhi bidhi sambhu suranha samujhāvā. puni āgēm bara basaha calāvā. 3.

Lord Shiva advised the gods in the aforesaid manner and told them to abandon being sceptical or amazed, but rather make the best of this rare privilege that has come their way (by enjoying themselves and rejoicing).

Having done this, he moved his bull (i.e. his mount, named ‘Nandi’) ahead (so that he can move along with the bridegroom’s party that was slowly heading towards the venue of the wedding ceremonies). (3)

देवन्ह देखे दसरथु जाता । महामोद मन पुलकित गाता ॥ ४ ॥

साधु समाज संग महिदेवा । जनु तनु धरें करहिं सुख सेवा ॥ ५ ॥

सोहत साथ सुभग सुत चारी । जनु अपबरग सकल तनुधारी ॥ ६ ॥

dēvanha dēkhē dasarathu jātā. mahāmōda mana pulakita gātā. 4.

sādhū samāja saṅga mahidēvā. janu tanu dharēm karahim sukha sēvā. 5.

sōhata sātha subhaga suta cārī. janu apabaraga sakala tanudhārī. 6.

The gods saw king Dasrath going towards the palace of king Janak where the marriage was to be solemnised. His heart and mind were filled with euphoria, and his body was thrilled with ecstasy. (4)

He (Dasrath) was surrounded by sages and other holy men such as Brahmins etc. It appeared that all the joys and happiness that one expects in this world have personified themselves in their forms to serve (i.e. surround) the king. [In other words, since Brahmins and holy men represent all auspicious virtues in this world, their presence around Dasrath gave the impression that all the goodness that exists in this world have assembled to serve him because he was blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of creation as his dear son. This was a privilege and honour that no one else got in this creation.]¹ (5)

All the four sons were with Dasrath. They represented personified forms of spiritual bliss, beatitude and felicity that a soul yearns for². (6)

[Note—¹We have already read how all the good omens and signs of good fortunes had collected together at the time of departure of Lord Ram's marriage party from Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Mana, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

Refer also to Ram Charit Mana, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 302 which says that Dasrath alongside sage Vasistha, his royal priest, looked as majestic and grand as Indra, the king of gods, looked in the company of the guru of the gods known as Brihaspati (Jupiter).

²The four type of spiritual liberation that a creature's soul wishes to have are the following—Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya.

Salokya Mukti means to obtain the abode of the chosen deity which the worshipper worships.

Samipya Mukti means to reside close to the deity worshipped in its abode.

Sarupya Mukti means to attain a divine form which is similar to the deity worshipped.

Sayujya Mukti means to become one with the deity worshipped. In other words it means to merge oneself with the Lord God.

Any of these four types of Muktis give the creature's soul its much desired peace and bliss.]

मरकत कनक बरन बर जोरी । देखि सुरन्ह भै प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि रामहि बिलोकि हियँ हरषे । नृपहि सराहि सुमन तिन्ह बरषे ॥ ८ ॥

marakata kanaka barana bara jōrī. dēkhi suranha bhai prīti na thōrī. 7.
puni rāmahi bilōki hiyaṁ haraṣē. nṛpahi sarāhi sumana tinha baraṣē. 8.

The affection that sprouted in (the heart of) the gods when they saw the two pairs of princes—one of the hue of emerald (i.e. dark-hued Lord Ram and his younger brother Bharat) and the other with the glow of gold (fair-complexioned Laxman and his younger brother Shatrughan)—was not of a small measure.

[In other words, the gods felt a huge wave of love and affection for the four forms of the Supreme Being that they beheld right in their front. The surge of love and affection was of an intense dimension, so deep and fathomless that it could not be measured; it was of 'no small measure'.] (7)

After watching all the four brothers, they looked at Lord Ram once again. And the Lord's divine sight filled them with delight and euphoria. They (the gods) praised the king (Dasrath) in glowing terms, and showered flowers (upon him).

[The gods looked at all the four brothers and were extremely pleased at this sight. But then they focused their attention on Lord Ram who was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation. Lord Ram was the 'hero' of the occasion, and the cynosure of all eyes that were fixed on him. The Lord was so charming to behold that his form captivated the mind and the heart of the beholder.] (8)

दो०. राम रूपु नख सिख सुभग बारहिं बार निहारि ।

पुलक गात लोचन सजल उमा समेत पुरारि ॥ ३१५ ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpu nakha sikha subhaga bārahir̥m bāra nihāri.
pulaka gāta lōcana sajala umā samēta purāri. 315.

When Lord Purari (Shiva) and his divine consort Uma watched the most enchanting and beauteous form of Lord Ram from head to foot, they were so charmed and enthralled with this image that they looked at it repeatedly with a thrilled body that was overcome with exhilaration and eyes that were filled with tears (of love, affection, devotion and attraction for the Lord).

[This is because they were not contented by looking at the Lord's most endearing form. So, even after seeing it so many times, they continued to look at it again and again repeatedly.] (Doha no. 315)

[Note—When king Manu and his wife Satrupa had done severe penance to get a divine vision of Lord Vishnu, and the Lord had finally revealed himself before them, the couple was awe-struck by the Lord's divine beauty and charm so much so that no matter how intently they looked at him, they did not find it enough and wished to continue to see the Lord for an infinite period of time. It is with this purpose in mind—that they can watch the Lord from up close, and as much as their heart and eyes wanted—that they requested him to become their son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 148—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 150.

Another instance is in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 260 where Bharat tells Lord Ram that he has never been contented by looking at the divine form of the Lord.]

चौ०. केकि कंठ दुति स्यामल अंगा । तड़ित बिनिंदक बसन सुरंगा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kēki kaṇṭha duti syāmala aṅgā. taḍita binindaka basana suraṅgā. 1.

[These four verses describe the stunning beauty of the image or form of Lord Ram as he headed towards the venue of the wedding ceremony to be solemnised in the palace of king Janak. This description should be compared with the one that describes the Lord's beautiful form at the time he came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 244.]

Lord Ram's glowing complexion was of a radiant dark hue that resembled the glow of a peacock's neck¹, while the clothes that he wore were of different colours and dazzled like the brilliance of lightening². (1)

[Note—¹The peacock is enamoured of the rain-bearing clouds because as soon as this bird hears the distant rumbling of the approaching clouds, or sees them overhead in the sky, it becomes ecstatic and begins to dance. The complexion of Lord Ram's body is universally depicted in all the versions of the Ramayan as being 'blue or azure' like the

colour of the sky. The basic philosophy behind this choice of colour is that Lord Ram is a personified form of 'Brahm', the all-pervading, all-encompassing, cosmic, invisible and attribute-less form of the Supreme Being. This form of Brahm that surrounds everything and permeates everywhere in this creation is best manifested in the form of the 'sky element' which is the subtlest of the five basic elements of creation. The other elements are air, fire, water and earth.

A true lover gets so submerged in the thoughts of his or her beloved that he or she becomes one with the latter—i.e. there remains no distinction between the lover and the beloved. This emotional state of affairs is metaphorically depicted by way of saying that they become alike in colour.

Here, the narrator of Lord Ram's divine story is none else but Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35. And it well established that Lord Shiva has a blue or purple tinged throat. This is why he is also known as 'Neel-Kantha', the Lord with a blue throat. Lord Shiva is a great admirer and devotee of Lord Ram, and therefore he, being the one who is narrating this divine story, has used the metaphor of the peacock's neck to indicate that when he (i.e. Lord Shiva) was watching Lord Ram at that moment, he (Shiva) was so lost in the huge waves of love and affection that heaved in his heart for his beloved Lord (Ram) that he could see no other colour but the one of his 'own self' being reflected in the complexion of Lord Ram.

²Usually Lord Ram is depicted as wearing a 'Pitambar' which is a long, yellow body-wrapping one-piece silk cloth that is worn by Lord Vishnu whose incarnation he was. But the last word used in this verse is 'Suranga', which means multiple colours that are auspicious and charming, but not necessarily yellow. This is justified because this is the occasion of the Lord's marriage, and a groom is decked up in all finery for this once-in-his-life-time occasion. The best of cloth and the best of combination of colours were used to make the garments and robes of Lord Ram for this most happy moment of his life. This will be clearly hinted in the next verse no. 2 that deals with the Lord's ornaments.]

ब्याह बिभूषन बिबिध बनाए । मंगल सब सब भाँति सुहाए ॥ २ ॥

byāha bibhūṣana bibidha banā'ē. maṅgala saba saba bhām̐ti suhā'ē. 2.

His entire body had been gracefully decorated with fabulous ornaments especially crafted in numerous designs and patterns especially for the occasion of the Lord's marriage, and all of them bore auspicious signs, were most pleasant and wonderful to look at. (2)

सरद बिमल बिधु बदन सुहावन । नयन नवल राजीव लजावन ॥ ३ ॥

sarada bimala bidhu badanu suhāvana. nayana navala rājīva lajāvana. 3.

His countenance and appearance were as charming, enthralling and captivating in their charm, enthrallment and bewitching beauty as the full moon is in a cloudless night of autumn.

His eyes were of a pink hue that reminded one of a pair of fully blooming lotus flowers of this colour. (3)

[Note—When the sky is cloudless in autumn, the full disc of the moon appears the most beautiful as compared to other nights throughout the year. Hence, this analogy is used to stress that since this day was a very special day in the life of Lord Ram, as he was going to be married that day, his face glowed with a radiance that had a special splendour to it. It does not mean at all that the glory of the Lord's face dimmed on other occasions or days, but it is a poet's way of giving importance to a particular event in the Lord's life—which is the day of his marriage.

Meanwhile, the Lord's eyes are compared to a pink lotus which is regarded as the most healthy and attractive form of this flower.]

सकल अलौकिक सुंदरताई । कहि न जाइ मनहीं मन भाई ॥ ४ ॥

sakala alaukika sundaratā'ī. kahi na jā'i manahīm mana bhā'ī. 4.

Taken all-in-all, the Lord's glamorous form was so exceptionally magnificent and fabulous that it was simply incomparable and beyond description as if it was out of this world and had an heavenly dimension to it. It enchanted the Mana (mind and heart) of the beholder, but since the Mana lacked eyes to see and a mouth to speak about it, it felt unable to describe the astounding beauty and charm of the countenance and image of Lord Ram. (4)

[Note—The eyes that beheld the Lord's beauty had no power to speak, and the mouth that could describe had no eyes, so none of them were fully equipped and competent to narrate what they saw or spoke about. Emotions of affection and love have their seat in the heart, while the mind controls all the sense organs and their conscious functions. Unfortunately, neither the heart nor the mind themselves have their own powers to see and speak, and the body of a living being has to depend upon the eye to see and the mouth to speak. The eye and the mouth are separate and independent units of the body like the heart and the mind. Hence, the 'Mana' (mind-heart complex) could not describe what it saw in terms of the fabulously magnificent view of the image of Lord Ram decked up in all finery as a groom heading to the venue of his wedding ceremony.]

बंधु मनोहर सोहहिं संगी । जात नचावत चपल तुरंगी ॥ ५ ॥

bandhu manōhara sōhahīm saṅgā. jāta nacāvata capala turaṅgā. 5.

[The next four verses, i.e. nos. 5-8, describe the horses upon which the four brothers rode.]

The (four) brothers looked elegant as they moved ahead together on their agile steeds whom they made to dance lively and prance with sprightly steps. (5)

राजकुअँर बर बाजि देखावहिं । बंस प्रसंसक बिरिद सुनावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

rājaku'amra bara bāji dēkhāvahīm. bansa prasansaka birida sunāvahīm. 6.

The other princes who were accompanying them (i.e. the many friends of Lord Ram who had come from Ayodhya and other kingdoms to participate in the Lord's marriage function) also showed their respective well-groomed horses and their skills, while the royal bards who accompanied these princes recited verses in their honour, praising their respective families and their glories and achievements. (6)

[Note—Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249.]

जेहि तुरंग पर रामु बिराजे । गति बिलोकि खगनायकु लाजे ॥ ७ ॥

jēhi turāṅga para rāmu birājē. gati bilōki khaganāyaku lājē. 7.

Even the king of birds, i.e. 'Garud', the Eagle who is regarded as a vehicle of Lord Vishnu, felt ashamed when he saw the speed and agility and nimbleness of the horse on which Lord Ram rode. (7)

[Note—Traditionally Garud is regarded as the fastest creature in creation. Whenever Lord Vishnu wishes to go anywhere he summons Garud, and the latter takes the Lord to his desired destination in a fraction of a second. But when Garud watched the way the horse of Lord Ram moved with quick, sprightly and nimble steps that had a spring-action in them, his pride of being the fastest mover in this creation was crushed. Garud realized for once that it is the Lord who empowers him (Garud) to move with lightening speed, and this quality of moving with such phenomenally quick speed is not something over which Garud had any personal right as is proved now when the horse upon which Lord Ram was sitting was also able to move with equally quick steps like the ones for which Garud was so falsely proud of.]

कहि न जाइ सब भाँति सुहावा । बाजि बेषु जनु काम बनावा ॥ ८ ॥

kahi na jā'i saba bhām̐ti suhāvā. bāji bēṣu janu kāma banāvā. 8.

The horse on which Lord Ram rode was so astonishingly wonderful and charming to behold that it is not possible to describe its beauty and magnificence. It looked as if Kamdeo, the god of beauty and charm, has himself assumed the form of a horse to serve the Lord personally. (8)

[Note—Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and thus he represents the best of everything, the best of qualities and virtues in this creation. This fact is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 19.

'Beauty' is a word that symbolises the best things in this world, for its opposite word is 'ugly' that would stand for everything that is unworthy, unholy and bad. This being the case, it is naturally expected that the horse the Lord rode should also be a match for the beauty of the Lord; it should be the best of all the horses in creation. Since 'beauty' is used as a measurement for the good virtues of life, and since the god who personifies this quality in its physical form is Kamdeo, so the latter decided not to delegate this duty of beautifying the Lord's mount to anybody else but to do it himself. And hence he became a horse to serve Lord Ram.

Refer also the following Chanda.]

छं०. जनु बाजि बेषु बनाइ मनसिजु राम हित अति सोहई । १ ।
 आपनें बय बल रूप गुन गति सकल भुवन बिमोहई ॥ २ ॥
 जगमगत जीनु जराव जोति सुमोति मनि मानिक लगे । ३ ।
 किंकिनि ललाम लगामु ललित बिलोकि सुर नर मुनि ठगे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

janu bāji bēṣu banā'i manasiju rāma hita ati sōhaī. 1.
 āpanēm baya bala rūpa guna gati sakala bhuvana bimōhaī. 2.
 jagamagata jīnu jarāva jōti sumōti mani mānika lagē. 3.
 kiṅkini lalāma lagāmu lalita bilōki sura nara muni ṭhagē. 4.

It appears that the god of beauty and charm (known as 'Kamdeo') has himself assumed the form of a steed in order to serve Lord Ram, and in the process acquire acclaim and honour for himself. (1)

In this physical form, he (Kamdeo as the horse) appears to enthrall and fascinate the entire world with his youthfulness, his strength and vigour, his astounding beauty and charm, and his excellent qualities and virtues as well as personality. (2)

The horse's saddle is bejeweled and glittering with the illumination emanating from the pearls, the precious gems and the rubies that are embedded on all its sides. (3)

The magnificent bridle is adorned with small tinkling bells, and it looks so fabulous that the exalted gods, the ordinary men and the great sages who saw it were dazed and awe-struck by its beauty and the soft sound made by its tiny bells (as the horse danced, swayed and moved forward). (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4]

[Note—Kamdeo is eternally beautiful and is the only god whose physically attractive and captivating form that has an exceptional charm is cited by way of an example whenever the concepts of beauty, magnificence, attractiveness, passion and charm are to be depicted.

So, though he is inherently beautiful and charming, being closely associated with the Supreme Lord of this creation in the form of Lord Ram and making the Lord sit on his back on a very special event when all the gods, the humans and the sages are in attendance, closely observing the beauty of the Lord to fill their eyes with this magnificent sight, gave Kamdeo a special occasion, a special chance to show-case his own beauty and draw attention of the world towards himself.

Kamdeo was very clever for he had very wisely realized that if he joined the ranks of the other gods and watched the Lord's marriage function along with them, then he will be lost in the sea of so many handsome, good-looking gods and beautiful, bewitching goddesses, all of them dressed in their finest and presenting themselves in the best manner possible. No one will pay any attention to him. But now when he became a horse and Lord Ram sat on his back, Kamdeo became the cynosure of all eyes; he became the center of attention as well as attraction. And to this was added the rare honour of being able to serve the Lord during a happy event during his sojourn on earth.

Remember: All the other gods would get an opportunity to serve the Lord in their forms as monkeys and bears as directed by the old patriarch Brahma, the creator, who had advised them to assume these forms and serve Lord Vishnu when he manifests

himself on earth as Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it.

But unfortunately for Kamdeo, he was apparently not assigned any duty. Not to be outdone, he decided to serve Lord Ram in the happiest moment of his life—that of his marriage.

Now, come to think of it—Kamdeo had overtaken the other gods hands down to serve the Lord in a very special way, and in this he was very privileged and blessed. Well, this is because while the other gods would serve Lord Ram in the forest during a sad and unpleasant phase in the Lord's life, when he was grieving at having lost his dear wife Sita who was abducted by the demon king Ravana, by helping him to collect a huge army of monkeys and bears, crossing the mighty ocean and conquering Lanka by defeating Ravana, Kamdeo, on the other hand, had served the Lord when he was enjoying every moment of the time that passed because it was a happy occasion of his marriage.]

दो०. प्रभु मनसहिं लयलीन मनु चलत बाजि छबि पाव ।
भूषित उड़गन तड़ित घनु जनु बर बरहि नचाव ॥ ३१६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu manasahim layalīna manu calata bāji chabi pāva.
bhūṣita uḍagana taḍita ghanu janu bara barahi nacāva. 316.

The beauty of the horse was magnified manifold by the fact that its 'Mana' (mind and heart) was completely in sync with that of Lord Ram so much so that the former could understand what the Lord wanted, and it danced and moved in accordance to the Lord's wishes even without the Lord giving any overt instructions to it.

This complete compatibility, coordination and synchronization between the moves of the horse and the wish of the Lord reminded one of the way the rain-bearing dark cloud that is illuminated by the dazzle of lightening in the sky that is studded with twinkling stars is able to make a charmed peacock dance voluntarily and merrily on its own in step with the rumble and thunder of the cloud. (Doha no. 316)

[Note—Here, Lord Ram is compared to the dark rain-bearing cloud because of his dark complexion. The horse is likened to the peacock that looks very beautiful when it opens its feathers and dances as soon as it sights this cloud. The sound emanating from the tiny tinkling bells attached to the bridle is like the gentle rumble of the cloud; the gems, rubies and pearls attached to the saddle are like the countless stars in the sky; and the way they dazzle and shine reminds one of the frequent streaks of lightening that pass through the cloud.

The remarkable thing to note in this imagery is this: When dark clouds appear in the sky, the stars vanish from sight; only lightening and rumble of the cloud remain. It will be noted here that the gems and pearls are embedded in the saddle upon which Lord Ram sits, and obviously when the horse moves and dances these gems would be hidden from sight as the body of the Lord shifts on the saddle and the ceremonial robes that he wears covers the sides of the saddle completely.

On the other hand, the bridle and its reins are not hidden from view, and the Lord holds the rein in his hands. The bells are attached to it, and it is also bejeweled. So this long rein and decorated bridle would represent the streak of lightening, and the soft sound of the tiny bells attached to them would be like the rumble of the cloud.]

चौ०. जेहिं बर बाजि रामु असवारा । तेहि सारदउ न बरनै पारा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jēhim bara bāji rāmu asavārā. tēhi sārada'u na baranai pārā. 1.

[Summarizing the beauty and the good luck of the horse on which Lord Ram was sitting, the horse who actually was the god named Kamdeo in its physical form, Tulsidas says—] Even Sarda, the goddess of speech and knowledge, would not be able to describe the horse on which Lord Ram rode (as the Lord proceeded towards the pavilion where his marriage was to be solemnised). (1)

[Note—The discussion about the horse of Lord Ram commenced in Chaupai line no. 7 that preceded Doha no. 316, and the present verse concludes this description.

Another important point to note here is that the horse on which Lord Ram rode has been singled out to be the one whose beauty and good luck cannot be described by Sarda. This is important because otherwise it would be construed that all the horses—such as the ones on which Lord Ram's other brothers rode as well as those on which their friends and other princes who had come to attend the marriage ceremony rode—were of equal beauty and magnificence. This was not the case simply because the god of beauty and magnificence, i.e. Kamdeo, had himself assumed the form of a horse to serve Lord Ram, whereas all the other horses were ordinary animals, though they were all thoroughbreds and chosen with great perfection. A distinction had to be made.]

संकरु राम रूप अनुरागे । नयन पंचदस अति प्रिय लागे ॥ २ ॥

saṅkaru rāma rūpa anurāgē. nayana pañcadasa ati priya lāgē. 2.

Lord Shiva was completely enthralled by the beauteous image of Lord Ram, and he loved to have fifteen eyes (which enabled him to see the divine image of the Lord more clearly and intensely). (2)

[Note—Lord Shiva has three eyes—two conventional eyes and one additional eye in the center of the forehead above the root of the nose. This third eye is known as the eye of wisdom, and it symbolizes Shiva's most exalted spiritual stature as the god who has realized the supreme truth of his own 'self'. The three-eyed Shiva is known as 'Trayambak'. The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 4, verse no. 29 says that the Lord has three eyes, and hence called 'Trinetrum'. This third eye represents the 'fire element'. Refer: The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 92-94 which say that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the fire element.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 11 says that Shiva represents the third state of consciousness known as the Sushupta state, and this is symbolized by the third eye which burns all delusions.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 which reiterates that Shiva has 'three eyes'.

Shiva is also said to have five heads, thereby giving him the name 'Panch Mukhi'. This fact is mentioned in *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100 which says that "as the deity of the sky element, Lord Shiva has a moon tucked in his lock of hairs, besides having five mouths, ten arms and three eyes.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 220 which reiterates that Shiva has 'five heads'.

This being the case, the total number of eyes are 5 heads x 3 eyes in each head = 15 eyes.

There are instances in Ram Charit Manas where we find Lord Shiva being completely captivated and enchanted by the beautiful image of Lord Ram whom he adores and worships as his revered deity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50 when Lord Shiva saw Lord Ram while he was returning home after paying a visit to the hermitage of sage Agastya; (ii) Chanda line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 511 where Ahilya has acknowledged this fact of Shiva loving the sight of Lord Ram's beautiful image when she was offering her prayers to the latter; (iii) Doha no. 315 above which also says the same thing.

हरि हित सहित रामु जब जोहे । रमा समेत रमापति मोहे ॥ ३ ॥

hari hita sahita rāmu jaba jōhē. ramā samēta ramāpati mōhē. 3.

*When both Ramapati ("ramāpati"; i.e. Lord Vishnu) and his divine consort Rama ("ramā"; i.e. goddess Laxmi) watched Lord Ram along with his wonderful horse ("Hari"), they were so enthralled at this fascinating and beautiful sight that both of them gazed at it intently, feeling amazed and dazed. (3)

[*Note—The word "Hari" has many connotations—such as a horse, the sun, a monkey, and of course Lord Vishnu. Now, this is very interesting: Lord Vishnu has himself manifested in the form of Lord Ram on the request of the gods and mother earth so that the cruel demons can be eliminated—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse has a profound metaphysical import—it succinctly brings into focus the great metaphysical and spiritual philosophy as propounded by the Upanishads. Lord Vishnu represents the 'super Consciousness' that is also known as the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma or the supreme Soul or the supreme Holy Spirit of creation, while Lord Ram is an image of this very Parmatma that is seen in a gross world that is unable to perceive anything that is subtle and sublime but can easily see that which is gross. The Atma or the soul that resides in the physical gross body of someone that the ignorant world likes to recognize as 'Ram', the prince of Ayodhya, is the same cosmic Atma or the supreme Consciousness that is a universal and all-pervading entity which has a subtle and sublime dimension. Vishnu is the cosmic form of the super Consciousness, while Lord Ram is the gross form of the same Consciousness that reveals it's self in a physical gross body of a prince. Lord Ram embodies the universal Holy Spirit that is revealed in his form.

In simple terms this verse means that Vishnu, who is the primary Parmatma, was watching his own image in the form of Lord Ram, and the former was stunned at the beauty of his own image which made him wonder how beautiful he actually was. Let us take an example to understand this phenomenon. We cannot see our own selves without the help of a reflecting surface such as a mirror upon which an image can be formed. So,

Vishnu did not know hitherto how beautiful was his cosmic form, known as the Viraat Purush in the Upanishads, until he saw it being reflected in the image of Lord Ram!

It is such a wonderful idea depicted in such a wonderful way that one is left dumbfounded and with all praises for the intellectual maturity of the poet Tulsidas who has written this holy book Ram Charit Manas.

Now, the next question is: why was Rama (Laxmi) captivated by the beautiful image of Lord Ram? Well, the answer is obvious and simple: it was for the first time she was seeing her own divine consort Lord Vishnu in a physical form that can be viewed with eyes, because hitherto she could not see how beautiful Vishnu was as he lived in his primary cosmic form as the Viraat Purush that is invisible. In other words, since Lord Ram was the 'visible' form of the primarily 'invisible' Vishnu, Laxmi was stunned at her Lord's beauty.]

निरखि राम छबि बिधि हरषाने । आठइ नयन जानि पछिताने ॥ ४ ॥

nirakhi rāma chabi bidhi haraṣānē. āṭha'i nayana jāni pachitānē. 4.

Watching intently the beauteous image of Lord Ram, the creator Bidhi (Brahma) was exhilarated, but he regretted that he has only eight eyes (as compared to Shiva who could enjoy this beautiful image of Lord Ram with his fifteen eyes). (4)

[Note—Brahma has four heads, and therefore eight eyes. 4 heads x 2 eyes in each head = 8 eyes.

In iconography, Brahma is depicted as an old sage with four heads or mouths that represent the four Vedas (Rik, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Yugs (eras or epochs—Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali), the four main directions (north, east, south and west), the four Varanas (classes of the society—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra), and the four Ashrams (phases of life—Brahmacharya, Grishastya, Vaanprastha and Sanyas).

He regretted that he is unable to enjoy the divine sight of Lord Ram as much as Shiva who has fifteen eyes, Lord Kartikeya who has twelve eyes, and even Indra, the king of gods, who is said to have thousands of eyes on his body that are represented by the holes created on it by a curse of sage Gautam.]

सुर सेनप उर बहुत उछाहू । बिधि ते डेवढ़ लोचन लाहू ॥ ५ ॥

sura sēnapa ura bahuta uchāhū. bidhi tē ḍēvaṛḥa lōcana lāhū. 5.

The commander of the army of gods (i.e. Lord Kartikeya¹ who is also known as 'Shadanan', the one with six heads) felt very happy that he has one-and-a-half times more eyes than Bidhi (Brahma), and so is able to take in the visual delight of viewing the magnificent image of Lord Ram by that enhanced number. (5)

[Note—¹Kartikeya is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and he has six heads. This gives him another name of 'Shadaanan'—the Lord with six heads. Each head has two eyes, and hence the total numbers of eyes are: 6 heads x 2 eyes each = 12 eyes.

According to legends, he was reared by six divine celestial mothers who personified the constellation called Krittikaa (or Pleiades), hence the name 'Kartikeya'. He assumed six faces to suckle milk from all these six mothers, hence called 'Shadaanan'—one with six heads or mouths.]

रामहि चितव सुरेस सुजाना । गौतम श्रापु परम हित माना ॥ ६ ॥

rāmahi citava surēsa sujānā. gautama śrāpu parama hita mānā. 6.

When the king of gods (i.e. Indra) gazed at Lord Ram, he was so glad (to be able to view the stunning beauty of the Lord) that for once he felt blessed for the curse of sage Gautam¹. (6)

[Note—¹The story goes that once sage Gautam found Indra, who was very lascivious and sexually pervert by nature inspite of being the king of gods, in an uncompromising state with his wife Ahilya. The sage was so infuriated that he cursed Ahilya to become a stone, and Indra to have his body perforated with thousands of holes that would enable him to look at women with them.

Now, though this curse made Indra look ugly and unable to hide his evil deed because wherever he went everyone could see those holes and remember how pervert and sinful he had been, this curse proved to be a blessing in disguise for him now as he was able to watch Lord Ram with all these thousands of eyes.]

देव सकल सुरपतिहि सिहाहीं । आजु पुरंदर सम कोउ नाही ॥ ७ ॥

dēva sakala surapatihi sihāhīm. āju purandara sama kō'u nāhīm. 7.

All the gods were in full praise for their king (Indra), saying—‘Today, no one is as lucky and fortunate as ‘Purandar’ (i.e. the one who demolishes the city of his enemies; their king Indra who defeats the enemies of gods).’ (7)

[Note—The gods were virtually jealous of Indra because none of them had ‘thousands’ of eyes as he so that they could enjoy the divine view of Lord Ram as much as he could. Brahma had eight eyes, Shiva had fifteen eyes, Kartikeya had twelve eyes, and the rest of the gods had two eyes each. So in this context, Indra was the luckiest one.]

मुदित देवगन रामहि देखी । नृपसमाज दुहुँ हरषु बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

mudita dēvagana rāmahi dēkhī. nr̥pasamāja duhum̐ haraṣu bisēṣī. 8.

Verily, all the gods (Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Kartikeya, Indra and the rest of them) were euphoric and rejoiced at the sight of Lord Ram (who looked fabulous and magnificent in his fully bejeweled and decorated form as a groom astride a magnificent horse).

Likewise, all the members of the royal courts of the two kingdoms (of Ayodhya and Janakpur) were also exhilarated beyond measure. (8)

छं०. अति हरषु राजसमाज दुहु दिसि दुंदुभीं बाजहिं घनी । १ ।

बरषहिं सुमन सुर हरषि कहि जय जयति जय रघुकुलमनी ॥ २ ॥

एहि भाँति जानि बरात आवत बाजने बहु बाजहीं । ३ ।

रानी सुआसिनि बोलि परिछनि हेतु मंगल साजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati haraṣu rājasamāja duhu disi dundubhīm bājahīm ghanī. 1.
 baraṣahīm sumana sura haraṣi kahi jaya jayati jaya raghukulamanī. 2.
 ēhi bhāmṭi jāni barāta āvata bājanē bahu bājahīm. 3.
 rānī su'āsini bōli parichani hētu maṅgala sājahīm. 4.

There was exceptionally great amount of euphoria and happiness among the members of the two royal courts as well as the subjects of the two kingdoms (of Ayodhya and Janakpur). Kettle drums were played loudly and enthusiastically on both the sides. (1)

The exhilarated gods showered flowers (from the sky) to celebrate the occasion, exclaiming in ecstasy, 'Hail, Hail; Glory to the Lord who is like a jewel (the best, the most exalted and an excellent member) of king Raghu's family (or dynasty).' (2)

In this way, amid rejoicings and merriment, when it became known within the city (of Janakpur) that the marriage procession has arrived and is approaching the venue of the wedding ceremony, many sorts of musical instruments started playing. (3)

Meanwhile, as soon as queen Sunayana (the mother of Sita) heard of this good news, she summoned well-decked up ladies whose husbands were alive, and began arranging auspicious items to prepare to welcome the groom when he arrives¹. (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹The auspicious items were arranged on large plates and kept ready. Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3 describes what these were supposed to be—fresh curd, blades of dark grass known as Durva, a paste made from cow's dung, urine and bile, fresh leaves of the Basil plant, lighted earthen lamps, rice and other cereals, and so on.]

दो०. सजि आरती अनेक बिधि मंगल सकल सँवारि ।

चलीं मुदित परिछनि करन गजगामिनि बर नारि ॥ ३१७ ॥

dōhā.

saji āratī anēka bidhi maṅgala sakala samvāri.
 calīm mudita parichani karana gajagāmini bara nāri. 317.

Having arranged, in a variety of ways, all the auspicious items needed to perform the ritual of the Aarti¹ (showing of lighted lamps to the honoured guest who in this case was Lord Ram, the groom), these beautiful and charming ladies, who walked with an elegance and majesty of a healthy adult elephant, moved forward cheerfully to welcome the groom, perform his Aarti, and make their offerings to him. (Doha no. 317)

[Note—¹There were many ladies in the group headed by queen Sunayana that went out to receive Lord Ram and his party. Each of these ladies held a plate decorated with auspicious paraphernalia needed to do the Aarti. They arranged the items needed for this ritual in different ways according to their liking. This shows that there was a lot of

freedom and an informal environment of rejoicing when everyone had the freedom to enjoy the occasion in the best way he or she wished.]

चौ०. बिधुबदनीं सब सब मृगलोचनि । सब निज तन छबि रति महु मोचनि । १ ।
 पहिरें बरन बरन बर चीरा । सकल बिभूषन सजें सरीरा ॥ २ ॥
 सकल सुमंगल अंग बनाएँ । करहिं गान कलकंठि लजाएँ । ३ ।
 कंकन किंकिनि नूपुर बाजहिं । चालि बिलोकि काम गज लाजहिं ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bidhubadaniṁ saba saba mṛgalōcani. saba nija tana chabi rati madu mōcani. 1.
 pahirēṁ barana barana bara cīrā. sakala bibhūṣana sajēṁ sarīrā. 2.
 sakala sumaṅgala aṅga banā'ēṁ. karahiṁ gāna kalakaṅṭhi lajā'ēṁ. 3.
 kaṅkana kiṅkini nūpura bājahiṁ. cālī bilōki kāma gaja lajahiṁ. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-4 describe the ladies who had gone to extend a ceremonial welcome to Lord Ram by doing his Aarti and offering auspicious gifts to him. These verses are a natural flow from Doha no. 317 and its preceding verses.]

All the ladies who had gone with decorated plates full of auspicious items to ceremonially welcome the groom, Lord Ram, were pretty to look at, had young and handsome bodies with doe eyes. They were so good-looking and elegant in their demeanours and bearings that they trounced the pride of Rati, the consort of the god of beauty (known as Kamdeo), as being the most beautiful, elegant, attractive and handsome lady in creation. (1)

These charming ladies wore magnificent clothes of varying colours, designs and textures. Their entire bodies were decorated with ornaments of different varieties. [Ladies wore an assortment of ornaments such as earrings, nose-rings, bracelets, armlets, neck-bands, necklaces, waist-bands, anklets, toe-rings and so on.] (2)

Their limbs were further beautified by marks of auspicious signs and special ornamentations (showing that they are of noble birth, belong to the higher strata of society, are married with husbands who were still alive, and other such signs that women sport during auspicious moments)#. They sang melodious songs in a pleasant and sweet voice that would put to shame the sweet voice of the cuckoo*.

[#Some of the common marks are application of vermilion powder on the head, a 'dot' painted in the middle of the forehead, the 'Mangal Sutra' worn around the neck signifying that the ladies are married with a living husband, palms of hands and soles of legs painted with a dye, and so on.

*The girls who had accompanied Sita at the time of her appearing at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony had also sung sweet songs. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 248.] (3)

As they moved, a pleasant sound emanated from the bristling of bracelets they wore, as well as from the chiming of tiny bells attached to their waist-bands and anklets.

They moved with such a majestic gait that the elephant of Kamdeo* (the god who prides himself as being the most elegant, handsome and dignified in this creation) felt that it has been humiliated for being falsely proud of its majestic gait and bearing.

[*Kamdeo rides an elephant, and the manner in which a healthy young elephant walks is usually cited by poets and bards when they need to describe the majestic way a person of high stature and position moves—a series of swaying, robust, confident steps, overstepping obstacles easily.] (4)

[Note—When the word was sent out from the royal palace that ladies were to be selected to represent the kingdom of Janakpur at the time of the formal welcoming ceremony where an Aarti of the groom, Lord Ram, was to be done, a number of candidates must have appeared for the so-called selection process, and out of them those who were the most charming with a pleasant personality were selected to accompany queen Sunayana.

We can assume that a similar situation must have prevailed when young girls were to be selected to accompany Sita to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony. The girls who would accompany Sita were expected to be not only of having astounding beauty but also possessing intelligence and wit. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 246.

Great diligence was exerted in this selection process because these ladies would represent the women-folk of the entire kingdom of Janakpur in the eyes of the guests coming from Ayodhya which was another great kingdom known for its handsome citizens. In other words, the best ladies had accompanied queen Sunayana when she went to welcome Lord Ram and other guests of the marriage party.]

बाजहिं बाजने बिबिध प्रकारा । नभ अरु नगर सुमंगलचारा ॥ ५ ॥

bājahim bājanē bibidha prakārā. nabha aru nagara sumaṅgalacārā. 5.

Musical instruments of varying kinds were played, and auspicious hymns were chanted both on the ground as well as in the sky (heaven). (5)

[Note—On the ground, hymns and laudatory verses were recited by the Brahmins and bards, while in the sky it was done by the gods and celestial singers such as Kinnars.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319.]

सची सारदा रमा भवानी । जे सुरतिय सुचि सहज सयानी ॥ ६ ॥

कपट नारि बर बेष बनाई । मिलीं सकल रनिवासहिं जाई ॥ ७ ॥

करहिं गान कल मंगल बानी । हरष बिबस सब काहुँ न जानी ॥ ८ ॥

sacī sārādā ramā bhavānī. jē suratiya suci sahaja sayānī. 6.

kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣa banā'ī. milīm sakala ranivāsahim jā'ī. 7.

karahim gāna kala maṅgala bānīm. haraṣa bibasa saba kāhum' na jānīm. 8.

[Verse nos. 6-8 narrate how the different goddesses had assumed human forms to join in the celebrations. They mingled with other ladies so much so that it was impossible to distinguish between them.]

Sachi (the consort of Indra, the king of gods), Sarda (also known as Saraswati, the consort of Brahma the creator), Rama (also known as Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu), and Bhavani (also known as Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva), along with other consorts of exalted gods who were chaste, wise and intelligent [6], assumed the illusionary form of a human female, and all of them mingled indistinguishably with other members of the royal household (of king Janak) [7]. (6-7)

They (i.e. the goddesses in human forms) too joined in the singing of auspicious melodious songs in a sweet voice. Everyone (i.e. all the members of the royal family as well as other ladies of the kingdom) was so overwhelmed with joy and euphoria at that time that none of them could realize who these ladies were. (8)

[Note—The atmosphere of celebration and rejoicing was so overpowering that no human lady could realize that great goddesses were personally present amongst them and participating in the ceremonies like ordinary women-folk, as their close friends and compatriots. It was a wonder of astounding proportions, and the presence of these divine goddesses lent a special air of divinity, holiness, splendour and unqualified magnificence to the existing atmosphere of celebrations, euphoria and rejoicing.]

छं०. को जान केहि आनंद बस सब ब्रह्म बर परिछन चली । १ ।
 कल गान मधुर निसान बरषहिं सुमन सुर सोभा भली ॥ २ ॥
 आनंदकंदु बिलोकि दूलहु सकल हियँ हरषित भई । ३ ।
 अंभोज अंबक अंबु उमगि सुअंग पुलकावलि छई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kō jāna kēhi ānanda basa saba brahmu bara parichana calī. 1.
 kala gāna madhura nisāna baraṣahim sumana sura sōbhā bhalī. 2.
 ānandakandu bilōki dūlahu sakala hiyaṁ haraṣita bha'ī. 3.
 ambhōja ambaka ambu umagi su'aṅga pulakāvali cha'ī. 4.

Who would bother to scrutinize or worry about others and their identities as everyone was overwhelmed with ecstasy and submerged in euphoria marking the happy occasion? All the ladies moved forward to offer their greetings and obeisance to Brahm, the Supreme Being in the form of the groom Lord Ram. (1)

Sweet and melodious songs were being sung, kettle-drums were being played with a soft sound, and the gods were showering flowers from the sky to make the event very charming and auspicious. (2)

All the ladies were overwhelmed with a sense of immense happiness and contentedness in their hearts when they saw the groom (Lord Ram) who was like a treasury of bliss and happiness in a personified form. (3)

Their lotus-like eyes welled-up with tears of love and affection for the Lord (of their heart and dream), and their bodies were thrilled beyond measure. (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—Refer: Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 131—136 which also describe these events.]

दो०. जो सुखु भा सिय मातु मन देखि राम बर बेषु।
सो न सकहि कहि कलप सत सहस सारदा सेषु ॥ ३१८ ॥

dōhā.

jō sukhu bhā siya mātu mana dēkhi rāma bara bēṣu.
sō na sakahīṁ kahi kalapa sata sahasa sārādā sēṣu. 318.

The extent and dimension of happiness and joy that sprouted in the heart of the mother of Sita when she saw Lord Ram dressed as a groom was so profound and intense¹ that this feeling defied description by either Sarda (goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech) or the thousand-tongued Seshnath even if they had tried for a thousand years to attempt to narrate it². (Doha no. 318)

[Note—¹The mother of Sita was always longing to have Lord Ram as the groom for her daughter Sita. This is clearly pointed out in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257 which describe her anxiety before Lord Ram had broken the bow, and in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 263 which describes her sense of relief and great happiness after the Lord had broken the bow to ensure his marriage with Sita.

²It is a usual practice with poets that when they want to stress that something is very great and profound so much so that they cannot find words to adequately describe it, they employ this method of citing the inability of Saraswati and Seshnath to do it, because it means that if these two deities cannot narrate certain thing or event then it is impossible for humans to do so.

To cite an example of this symbolic way of showing that a scene is exceptionally beautiful so much so that words cannot do justice for it, we can refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 317 which deals with the horse on which Lord Ram is riding.

We shall read below that when Lord Ram and his three brothers returned to Ayodhya with their brides, the sight of the four couples were so fabulous that Sarda had tried to find a comparison but had failed in spite of her best efforts. So she decided to abandon her scholarship and instead enjoy the divine sight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 349.]

चौ०. नयन नीरु हटि मंगल जानी । परिछनि करहिं मुदित मन रानी ॥ १ ॥
बेद बिहित अरु कुल आचारू । कीन्ह भली बिधि सब व्यवहारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nayana nīru haṭi maṅgala jānī. parichani karahīṁ mudita mana rānī. 1.
bēda bihita aru kula ācārū. kīnha bhalī bidhi saba byavahārū. 2.

Realising that it was a most auspicious time, the queen restrained the tears (of affection and love) swelling-up in her eyes¹ and performed the ritual of offering Aarti (waving of

lights in ceremonial earthen lamps) and other rites that are suitable for such occasions with an euphoric heart and mind ('Mana'). (1)

She did everything with due diligence and completed all the rituals as prescribed by the Vedas² for such occasions and traditionally observed in her family (i.e. the kingdom of Janakpur)³, properly and enthusiastically. (2)

[Note—¹It has already been said above in Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318 that tears of love and affection welled-up in the lotus-like eyes of the queen. So this line completes the idea by saying that though ordinarily tears would have rolled down the queen's eyes, she managed to restrain them, because their rolling down could be misconstrued as her weeping in sorrow whereas the fact is that she was exceedingly happy and euphoric and not at all regretful. It was a joyous occasion and a broad smile was gracing her lips. She was singing auspicious songs befitting such occasions along with the other ladies who were accompanying her.

The queen's heart and mind were overwhelmed with surging love and affection, and it was that one moment in her life for which she was so eagerly waiting for all along. And naturally when her wishes were fulfilled, when her desires bore fruit she was swept off her feet with emotions.

Allowing tears to fall on an auspicious occasion is not a good thing to do. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7. Here the occasion was the return of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita from their 14-year forest exile when all the mothers were meeting them at Ayodhya. Though tears would have gushed out from their eyes under ordinary situation but they managed to hold them back as it was not the proper time to shed tears even if they were tears of joy.

²Performing of Aarti along with showering of flowers, rice grains, coloured powder and other auspicious items are a part of the ritual of formally welcoming a guest. And Lord Ram was not an ordinary guest; he was the beloved groom of Sita, and so all the rites were done carefully and diligently.

Though the overall rituals are the same as sanctioned in the Vedas, every society nevertheless has its own unique set of rites that sets it apart from the others. There were some specific rituals observed in Janakpur which may not have been prevalent in Ayodhya, and this is observed even in modern times today.

³All the rites were done in accordance with the sanction of the Vedas and as established in the society by tradition. There are other instances where the same idea is conveyed—that due diligence was practiced in doing the rituals properly in accordance with the prescription of the scriptures and established norms of the society: refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 352 which repeats this assertion at the time when religious ceremonies were being done to formally welcome the four brothers when they had returned to Ayodhya with their brides.]

पंच सबद धुनि मंगल गाना । पट पाँवड़े परहिं बिधि नाना ॥ ३ ॥

करि आरती अरघु तिन्ह दीन्हा । राम गमनु मंडप तब कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

pañca sabada dhuni maṅgala gānā. paṭa pām̐vaṛē parahim̐ bidhi nānā. 3.
kari āratī araghu tinha dīnhā. rāma gamanu maṇḍapa taba kīnhā. 4.

Meanwhile, there were five types of auspicious sounds that were heard on that occasion¹ besides the sound of melodious singing of auspicious songs that accompanied the rituals,

while carpets of different kinds were being spread (as the groom and his companions moved forward towards the marriage pavilion)². (3)

After performing the Aarti (waving of lighted earthen lamps) of Lord Ram, the queen offered oblations to him and offered water so that the Lord could wash his hands and feet before proceeding ahead. Then, Lord Ram moved ahead and proceeded towards the pavilion where the wedding ceremony was to be solemnized³. (4)

[Note—¹‘Five sounds’ refer to the following:--

(i) The sound of music produced by five types of musical instruments such as the Indian lute (Veena), the clapping of hands and the clashing of cymbals, the beating of kettle-drums, playing of the clarinet, and the blowing of the trumpet or any other wind instrument such as the conch.

(ii) The chanting of the hymns of the five branches of the Vedas by the Brahmins. These five branches are the following—Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Shukla Yajur Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda. This is known as ‘Veda-vani’, the words of the Vedas.

(iii) Besides this chanting of the Vedas, there was the singing of laudatory verses by family bards and minstrels known as ‘Bridawali sung by the royal Bandijans’, loud shouts of joy and applause known as ‘Jaya-vani’, the resounding sound emanating from conch shells which are blown during auspicious occasions and known as ‘Shankha-dhwani’, and the sound created by the beating of drums known as ‘Dundubhi-vani’.

All these sounds erupted simultaneously and created a cacophony of sounds.

Remember: Brahmins always played an important role in all auspicious functions, and therefore it is impossible to say that they weren’t present to chant the sacred hymns from the scriptures on this occasion. While songs were being sung by the ladies, the sacred hymns were being recited by the Brahmins. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 313 which is specific for this purpose.

²The spreading of carpets and the groom moving towards the marriage pavilion on them shows that Lord Ram had by now alighted from his horse and had walked on foot to the designated place where the wedding was to take place.

³The Aarti, the offering of oblations and flowers, and the washing of hands and feet were done after he had got-off the horse.

Another interpretation can be that the Aarti was performed while Lord Ram was still astride the horse, and as soon as he got down from it, flowers were showered on him, and water was offered to him to wash his hands and feet. Then the Lord moved slowly on the carpets that were rolled out before him as he walked forward.

These carpets were not spread before hand, but rolled out before him one after another as he moved forward.]

दसरथु सहित समाज बिराजे । बिभव बिलोकि लोकपति लाजे ॥ ५ ॥

dasarathu sahita samāja birājē. bibhava bilōki lōkapati lājē. 5.

King Dasrath looked majestic and glorious along with his royal entourage so much so that his majesty and glory put to shame all the other custodians of the world¹ (the ‘Lokpatis’). (5)

[Note—¹The choice of word ‘Lokpati’ by Tulsidas is remarkable. ‘Lok’ means ‘world’, and ‘Pati’ means its ‘lord’ or ‘master’. Therefore, this single word ‘Lokpati’ would cover all the kings of this terrestrial world, as well as Indra, the king of gods, who rules over heaven.

Now it must be noted here that all the kings and princes who had come to attend the bow-breaking ceremony had already gone back home—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 312. Hence, comparison with them is out of place. Only the gods were present on the occasion.

Therefore, the word ‘Lokpati’ clearly hints at Indra, the king of gods. This fact has been reiterated elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 313 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 6.]

समयं समयं सुर बरषहिं फूला । सांति पढ़हिं महिसुर अनुकूला ॥ ६ ॥

samayam samayam sura baraṣahim phūlā. sānti paṛhahim mahisura anukūlā. 6.

The gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven) from time to time¹, while on the ground the Brahmins (who are known as “the gods’ representative on earth”) recited the sacred hymns from the Vedas and other scriptures (known as “Shanti Paath”)². (6)

[Note—¹It must be noted here that the gods had showered flowers on every occasion that was to be celebrated. For instance, when Lord Ram and his brothers were born (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194), when Lord Ram had broken the bow (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262), when Sita had put the victory garland on Lord Ram (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 264), when the marriage party left Ayodhya for Janakpur (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 302), when king Dasrath was invited to come with Lord Ram so that the marriage rituals could commence (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314), and again when the gods saw Lord Ram on the horse (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 315), and so on.

²The symbolism of the Brahmins reciting the hymns of the Vedas alongside the gods showering flowers from the sky is clear when the former are called ‘Mahisurs’, literally meaning the ‘gods of earth’. It signifies that while the gods showed their joy by showering flowers from the heaven, their counterparts or representatives on earth, the Brahmins, showed their happiness by chanting the hymns of the Vedas as a symbolic gesture of blessing and joy.

It will be noted in Chanda line no. 3 herein below that ‘Brahma, the creator, and other gods had assumed the physical forms of Brahmins to enjoy the ceremonies’. Well, this clearly establishes why the Brahmins are honoured as being ‘Mahisurs’, the gods on earth. We have already read that the gods and goddesses had assumed human forms and mingled with the citizens of Janakpur to enjoy the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram, and they blended perfectly with other humans. So it was not possible to distinguish between actual human beings and gods in the form of humans. Therefore, all Brahmins were collectively called ‘Mahisurs’.]

नभ अरु नगर कोलाहल होई । आपनि पर कछु सुनइ न कोई ॥ ७ ॥

nabha aru nagara kōlāhala hō'ī. āpani para kachu suna'i na kō'ī. 7.

As a result of this thunderous sound of joy and happiness emanating from the sky as well as the ground (i.e. by the applause of the gods and playing of their musical instruments as

well as singing of celestial singers in the heaven, and singing of auspicious songs, playing of musical instruments and recitation of the hymns of the scriptures by the Brahmins on earth), there was a loud cacophony of sounds in the city (of Janakpur) so much so that no one could hear even their own words as well as what the others said. (7)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 318.]

एहि बिधि रामु मंडपहिं आए । अरघु देइ आसन बैठाए ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi rāmu maṇḍapahim ā'ē. araghu dē'i āsana baiṭhā'ē. 8.

On this wise Lord Ram arrived at the wedding pavilion. He was made to sit down on his seat after water was sprinkled on him and his feet were washed ceremoniously. (8)

[Note—Washed by whom? Well, the answer is ‘by the bride’s mother, queen Sunayana’. The ladies of the household escort the groom to the pavilion and perform initial rites before the elaborate rituals that are performed by Brahmins get under way. The gentlemen enter the pavilion after the ladies retire.

King Janak was still at the door with his counterpart, king Dasrath, and the rest of the party who had not entered the pavilion till this point of time. This will be absolutely clear in the verses that follow Doha no. 319 herein below.

Refer specially “Janaki Mangal”, verse no. 137-138 which specifically state that the friends of Sita brought Lord Ram to the pavilion while offering oblations and sprinkling water at his feet.]

छं०. बैठारि आसन आरती करि निरखि बरु सुखु पावहीं । १ ।
मनि बसन भूषन भूरि वारहिं नारि मंगल गावहीं ॥ २ ॥
ब्रह्मादि सुरबर बिप्र बेष बनाइ कौतुक देखहीं । ३ ।
अवलोकि रघुकुल कमल रबि छबि सुफल जीवन लेखहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

baiṭhāri āsana āratī kari nirakhi baru sukhu pāvahīm. 1.
mani basana bhūṣana bhūri vārahim nāri maṅgala gāvahīm. 2.
brahmādi surabara bipra bēṣa banā'i kautuka dēkhahīm. 3.
avalōki raghukula kamala rabi chabi suphala jīvana lēkhahīm. 4.

The bridegroom (Lord Ram) was made to sit on a seat after his Aarti was done. As they watched the Lord closely, they (the ladies along with the queen) felt very happy and blissful. (1)

The ladies first offered to the Lord numerous gems, clothes and ornaments, and then scattered them around him in abundant quantities (as a established gesture to show their immense pleasure at having him as their honoured guest of special importance as he was the groom of Sita, the princess of the kingdom), all the while singing auspicious songs in a melodious voice. (2)

Brahma, the creator, along with other exalted gods had assumed the form of Brahmins¹ as they cheerfully watched in amazement² the happy events unfolding before their eyes. (3)

All of them (i.e. all the gods) consider themselves most lucky as they affectionately gazed at the beauteous form of Lord Ram who brings delight to the race of king Raghu just as the sun makes the lotus cheerful so much so that the latter blooms at its sight². (4)

[Note—¹This is why the Brahmins were called ‘Mahi-surs’, the ‘gods on earth’, in Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. It was not possible to distinguish between human Brahmins and gods who were present on the occasion as Brahmins.

²The gods were amazed and dumbfounded because they could not imagine that Lord Vishnu whom they had known as the Viraat Purush without any form could actually be so beautiful and wonderful to look at. Prior to this they had thought that Vishnu was one like them, but now they realized that the Lord’s beauty far surpassed their imagination.]

दो०. नाऊ बारी भाट नट राम निछावरि पाइ ।
मुदित असीसहिं नाइ सिर हरषु न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ ३१९ ॥

dōhā.

nā'ū bārī bhāṭa ṇaṭa rāma nichāvari pā'i.
mudita asīsahīṁ nā'i sira haraṣu na hr̥dayam̐ samā'i. 319.

As the barbers, the heralds and the torch-bearers, the royal family bards and the dancers, et al, cheerfully and joyously collected the precious offerings that lay scattered around Lord Ram (as described in Chanda line no. 2 herein above), their hearts were overwhelmed with delight even as they profusely blessed the Lord and reverentially bowed before him. (Doha no. 319)

[Note—Refer also to “Geetawali”, Baal Kand, verse no. 6, stanza no. 23-24. These verses essentially say that everyone felt privileged and honoured to accept anything as gift that was related to Lord Ram even if they had to become a beggar to beg for it. In other words, no one felt ashamed at picking up the offerings that lay scattered around the Lord; rather they vied with each other for the honour of possessing even one item of the scatterings as a cherished memorabilia of the happy occasion that they would pass down their descendants from one generation to another.]

चौ०. मिले जनकु दसरथु अति प्रीतीं । करि बैदिक लौकिक सब रीतीं ॥ १ ॥
मिलत महा दोउ राज बिराजे । उपमा खोजि खोजि कबि लाजे ॥ २ ॥
लही न कतहुँ हारि हियँ मानी । इन्ह सम एइ उपमा उर आनी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

milē janaku dasarathu ati prītīṁ. kari baidika laukika saba rītīṁ. 1.
milata mahā dō'u rāja birājē. upamā khōji khōji kabi lājē. 2.

lahī na katahum̐ hāri hiyam̐ mānī. inha sama ē'i upamā ura ānī. 3.

[In the following verses we shall about the most cordial way king Janak met king Dasrath.]

King Janak met and embraced king Dasrath most cordially and with the greatest of affection. Janak observed all the formalities and customs required to be observed according to the edicts of the Vedas and established by convention when the bride's father met for the groom's father for the first time prior to the wedding ceremony¹. (1)

When two great monarchs met each other affectionately, they presented a spectacle so magnificent that even acclaimed poets and bards who are very adept at describing such rare spectacles and citing suitable analogies to suit such occasions failed to do so even after they tried their best to find a suitable analogy or metaphor. And having thus failed, they felt ashamed at their incompetence² (and the false honour that they had of being experts in their respective fields, an assumed expertise by virtue of which they had been appointed as court poets and bards by the two monarchs). (2)

Finally, when they were unable to find a suitable analogy or metaphor (that would even closely relate to the grandeur and magnificence of the glorious occasion), they felt baffled, accepting defeat in their Mana (heart and mind) and gave up, unanimously proclaiming that the meeting between these two great monarchs was of such astounding magnificence attended by scintillating joy and bubbly euphoria that it was better not to compare this meeting with anything else, but to let it be a unique event. So they declared that this meeting could be best described by saying that the pair (of king Janak and king Dasrath) is unique and likened to themselves alone³. (3)

[Note—¹(1) We have read in Doha no. 319 and its preceding verses how Lord Ram was welcomed by the ladies of the royal household and escorted to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be performed. Now here we read how king Dasrath was welcomed by his counterpart, king Janak. Genuine cordiality, immense warmth, high degree of affection, sincere bonhomie and a spontaneous bond of friendship that was forged at that time were literally infective and were the overriding emotions at that time.

Two renowned and great kingdoms had come together by a stroke of unexpected good luck to forge an alliance that would make them not only a powerful military force to reckon with but compliment each other when it came to splendour, glory and majesty in the community of great kingdoms and empires of the time. Both the kings were highly reputed and their respective kingdoms were equally prosperous and powerful, and therefore none of them felt any sort of complex vis-à-vis the other.

King Janak was all the more happy because he did not see any trace of unhappiness in the behaviour of king Dasrath that would indicate that the latter had felt insulted at not being invited to attend the bow-breaking ceremony, something that may have been nagging at Janak's conscience till now. On his part, king Dasrath felt exhilarated to realize that his son Lord Ram has married into an established family ruling over a great kingdom of Janakpur that is no less powerful and prosperous than his own kingdom of Ayodhya.

(2) Both the royal families were upholders of religious traditions and duly observed all the rules and customs as prescribed by the Vedas and other scriptures. Even small details point out to this practice—for instance, Dasrath always gave prominence to his guru, sage Vasistha, as did Janak who showed respects to his guru, sage Satanand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 197 at

the time of the naming ceremony of Lord Ram and his other brothers; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 at the time when sage Vishwamitra had gone to bring Lord Ram to the forest to protect his fire sacrifice; (iii) Doha no. 214 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that narrates king Janak going with his guru and other Brahmins to meet sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at Janakpur; (iv) Doha no. 293 when the letter announcing the good news of Lord Ram's marriage was taken by Dasrath himself to his guru Vasistha to seek his blessings even before the rest of the royal household was informed; (v) Doha no. 310, and Chaupai line no. 3 that follows this Doha when Vasistha was given precedence at the time when the marriage party departed from Ayodhya for Janakpur and the king sought his blessings prior to departure.

Again we read at various places in Ram Charit Manas that the edicts of the Vedas and customs of the society were duly observed by both the kings from time to time. For instance we read in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 302 that "king Dasrath had followed all the rituals as ordained by the Vedas and required to be done by tradition and family custom at the time of departure of the marriage party for Janakpur from Ayodhya".

Another instance is in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319 where exactly the same idea in the same words is expressed when it is narrated how queen Sunayana has duly welcomed the groom, Lord Ram, at the time of performing his Aarti and making oblations and offering gifts upon his arrival at the venue astride a horse. A little later on we shall read how all the customs and traditions were diligently observed at the time of the actual performance of marriage rituals in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chanda line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 323; and (ii) Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327.

In "Janki Mangal" of Tulsidas, we read about the same observance of Veda traditions and customs of the society in verse no. 139.

²There are other instances also where we read that expert poets and bards had failed to cite an appropriate example or analogy to describe certain events, and having thus failed they felt ashamed at themselves and their false pretension of expertise. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289 that relate to describing the immensity of the glory of Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother.

³Refer to "Janki Mangal", verse no. 129 that says that there is no comparison of the pair consisting of king Janak and king Dasrath anywhere in the three world, i.e. in the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world.

Refer also to line nos. 3-4 of Chanda no. 16 of "Janaki Mangal" that says—'When the two kings Dasrath and Janak who were now related to each other due to the marriage of their son and daughter respectively, and who were alike in glories and virtues, met each other, both felt extremely delighted. Watching them, the humans, the gods and the sages alike applauded them and raised their voice to praise them in a unanimous way.'

सामध देखि देव अनुरागे । सुमन बरषि जसु गावन लागे ॥ ४ ॥

जगु बिरंचि उपजावा जब तेँ । देखे सुने ब्याह बहु तब तेँ ॥ ५ ॥

सकल भाँति सम साजु समाजू । सम समधी देखे हम आजू ॥ ६ ॥

sāmadha dēkhi dēva anurāgē. sumana baraṣi jasu gāvana lāgē. 4.
jagu biranīci upajāvā jaba tēm. dēkhē sunē byāha bahu taba tēm. 5.

sakala bhām̐ti sama sāju samājū. sama samadhī dēkhē hama ājū. 6.

When the gods saw the two fathers-in-law developing fondness for each other, they too felt delighted. To celebrate the occasion, they (the gods) showered flowers from the sky and applauded them by singing their glories. (4)

The gods proclaimed, ‘We have seen many marriages and alliances between great families ever since the creator created this creation [5], but it is for the first time today that we have witnessed two great families of equal glory, greatness and grandeur getting united in a marriage alliance. [6]’ (5-6)

[Note—Indeed the two families were equal in their glory—because in one, i.e. the kingdom of Ayodhya represented by the family of king Dasrath, Lord Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram, and in another, i.e. the kingdom of Janakpur represented by the family of king Janak, Vishnu’s divine consort Laxmi had taken birth as Sita.]

देव गिरा सुनि सुंदर साँची । प्रीति अलौकिक दुहु दिसि माची ॥ ७ ॥

dēva girā suni sundara sām̐cī. prīti alaukika duhu disi mācī. 7.

*When everyone heard the words of the gods which were very true and most pleasant to hear, there was a flood of affection and rejoicing everywhere.

[*This verse can also be read as follows—When the word spread that the gods have endorsed this alliance, and the fact that what the gods say is always true and pleasant, there was a surge of affectionate feeling amongst the subjects of the two great kingdoms who rejoiced at this declaration by the gods.] (7)

[Note—Gods never tell a lie, and when the subjects of both the kingdoms heard that the gods have unequivocally supported and endorsed this alliance, all of them felt exceptionally happy. It was obviously a time to celebrate and rejoice.]

देत पाँवड़े अरघु सुहाए । सादर जनकु मंडपहिं ल्याए ॥ ८ ॥

dēta pām̐vaṛē araghu suhā'ē. sādara janaku maṇḍapahim lyā'ē. 8.

King Janak offered oblations and water to king Dasrath for washing his hands and feet, and then escorted the latter to the pavilion where the wedding was to be solemnized even as carpets were spread before Dasrath, one after another, as he moved forward towards the pavilion. (8)

[Note—The same procedure was followed while Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 319.]

We shall read a little later on that when a grand feast was organized for the grooms and their father king Dasrath along with all other members of the marriage party, carpets were spread all along the ground from their residences to the venue of the banquet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 328.]

छं०. मंडपु बिलोकि बिचित्र रचनाँ रुचिरताँ मुनि मन हरे । १ ।

निज पानि जनक सुजान सब कहँ आनि सिंघासन धरे ॥ २ ॥
 कुल इष्ट सरिस बसिष्ट पूजे बिनय करि आसिष लही । ३ ।
 कौसिकहि पूजत परम प्रीति कि रीति तौ न परै कही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

maṇḍapu bilōki bicitra racanām^१ ruciratām^१ muni mana harē. 1.
 nija pāni janaka sujāna saba kahum^१ āni siṅghāsana dharē. 2.
 kula iṣṭa sarisa basiṣṭa pūjē binaya kari āsiṣa lahī. 3.
 kausikahi pūjata parama prīti ki rīti tau na parai kahī. 4.

The pavilion was astoundingly wonderful to behold and tastefully decorated. It was so magnificent and artfully decked up that its beauty stole (i.e. enchanted and captivated) even the minds of sages (who are supposed to be immune to such worldly attractions). (1)

The wise and prudent king Janak had decorated thrones (seats or chairs that were specially designed and decorated for this occasion, had exquisite upholstery, and were very comfortable) brought in, and he placed them before the honoured guests himself¹. (2)

Janak then worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Vasistha the same way as he would have worshipped his family deity, seeking the sage's blessings which he got in unequivocal terms. (3)

After that, when he worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), the intensity of his sense of gratitude and thankfulness for the sage was so intense that it cannot be described². (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹The king is called 'wise and prudent' because he knew royal protocol well as he laid out the chairs in proper order so that the guests were seated in accordance with their importance and place in the hierarchy of the royal family as well as the society. For instance, king Dasrath and his royal priest sage Vasistha, along with sage Vishwamitra and Vamdeo etc. were seated in the front row at the center, followed by the brothers of Lord Ram, senior members of the royal court including chief ministers, Brahmins, other noble-men of Ayodhya, and so on and so forth.

Another reason of calling Janak 'wise and prudent' is that he knows that one should personally serve sages and seers besides guests of honour such as king Dasrath and his close associates instead of delegating such service to servants and other attendants. This is the reason why Janak stood himself and supervised the laying out of chairs, and then personally escorting the guests to their respective seats according to standard practice of royal protocol of the kingdom of Janakpur.

Now, from the practical point of view it seems highly unlikely that no seat or chair was placed at the venue before the guests started arriving. It would be absurd and highly incredulous to imagine it. Then what is the meaning of Chanda line no. 2 that says that Janak himself brought the thrones and made the guests sit on them? Well, it simply means that he may have shifted the chairs a bit forward or sideways to make it easy to escort the guests to their respective seats and as a gesture that he was personally clearing the way for them. May be also that he had removed some seats to make more space between adjacent chairs so that the more important amongst the guests could sit more comfortably with more leg-space between them.

²Janak was overwhelmed with gratitude for Vishwamitra because it was he who had come to his rescue by ordering Lord Ram to break the bow so as to remove the dark cloud of gloom and desperation that had overpowered Janak when none of the kings could break the bow and a dark future for his beloved daughter Sita stared right on his face. Had it not been for sage Vishwamitra's proactive stand and decision to order Lord Ram to break the bow, the present environment of joy and happiness would have been non-existent. Instead, there would have been grief and lamentations all around.

It was sage Vishwamitra who had been instrumental in bringing Lord Ram, the personified form of Lord Vishnu, to the doorstep of Janak, something for which great ascetics, hermits, sages and saints did severe Tapa (austerity and penance) but still would find difficult to achieve.]

दो०. बामदेव आदिक रिषय पूजे मुदित महीस ।
दिए दिव्य आसन सबहि सब सन लही असीस ॥ ३२० ॥

dōhā.

bāmadēva ādika riṣaya pūjē mudita mahīsa.
di'ē dibya āsana sabahi saba sana lahī asīsa. 320.

Then the king (Janak), who was euphoric with joy, duly worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Vamdeo and other sages and seers who were present on the occasion. He gave them all magnificent seats befitting their stature, and got blessings from all of them in return. (Doha no. 320)

[Note—The king was very happy, or 'euphoric with joy', because great sages had collected to bless the occasion. Amongst them were great names such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and Vamdeo. This was a rare privilege.

This Doha also indicates that Janak had first worshipped the two great sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra independently because they had a special relationship with Lord Ram, and then he worshipped the rest of the guest sages and seers led by Vamdeo together. After that, he ushered them to their respective seats.]

चौ०. बहुरि कीन्हि कोसलपति पूजा । जानि ईस सम भाउ न दूजा ॥ १ ॥
कीन्हि जोरि कर बिनय बड़ाई । कहि निज भाग्य बिभव बहुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri kīnhi kōsalapati pūjā. jāni īsa sama bhā'u na dūjā. 1.
kīnhi jōri kara binaya baṛāī. kahi nija bhāgya bibhava bahutāī. 2.

After offering his obeisance to the sages, Janak paid his respects to king Dasrath by duly worshipping him in a formal way and offering oblations to him with the same sincerity and reverence as he (Janak) would have offered to his family deity¹ (which in Janak's

case was Lord Shiva—“īśa”). Janak had no other thoughts in his mind while offering his respects to Dasrath². (1)

Janak humbly joined his palms in prayer and as a mark of respect for Dasrath, praising the latter’s high stature and extolling his glories, and acknowledging that his own honour, stature, rank and fortunes have been enhanced manifold by his association with the latter (Dasrath)³. (2)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “Ish” which has two main meanings—Lord Shiva, as well as a revered God that a man worships. Hence, the verse means that Janak offered his respects to Dasrath with the same reverence with which he would have worshipped his family deity, or Lord Shiva who was also worshipped in the family of Janak.

In ancient societies, Lord Shiva was worshipped as a universal deity, and that is why Shiva has been honoured with the epithet ‘Maha-Deva’, the Great God, the God who supercedes all the others.

²Janak did not regard Dasrath to be an ordinary king or emperor, but as being equivalent to Lord Shiva himself. Why? It is because Shiva is the only deity, the only godhead who takes the creature away from entanglements of the mortal world and provides his soul with liberation and deliverance. Dasrath was the worldly father of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, and hence he deserves being praised as the one who became instrumental in bringing the invisible Lord on this earth so that he becomes visible in the form of Lord Ram so that ordinary creatures who do not have access to high spiritual knowledge and wisdom, those who lack the wherewithal for liberation and salvation of their souls can at least now find deliverance from their worldly spiritual sufferings in a easy way by worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram with whom they can easily identify themselves as opposed to the abstract and invisible form of the Supreme Being that goes beyond their comprehension.

Since Dasrath was the worldly father of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, the former’s permission to the Lord to accept the alliance with Janak so that the latter could be in close proximity with a human form of the Lord was like fulfilling the desire of the soul of Janak to enjoy the bliss and happiness that comes with being near to the Lord, with being closely related and associated with the Lord. What more would Janak want than to have Lord Ram as his son-in-law, and for this he surely must treat Dasrath as being equivalent to Shiva who also takes the soul of the creature near to the Lord.

Remember: Lord Shiva provides the ‘Tarak Mantra’ to the dying man so that his soul finds liberation and deliverance from this body as well as the chance of rebirth in this world. And this ‘Tarak Mantra’ is the holy name of the Lord, which is the word “RAM”. Dasrath has made this possible for Janak in physical and practical terms, and so he deserves no less respect and honour than that reserved for Lord Shiva.

³Janak has praised Dasrath by saying that his own reputation and stature has been enhanced by his association with the latter. This acknowledgement by Janak also goes to prove the point that Dasrath was a bigger and more powerful king than Janak. In other words, whereas Dasrath was a ‘Chakravarti King’ or an Emperor whose realm and reign spread in all the directions that covered a large circular area (“Chakra” = a circle) of the earth, Janak’s kingdom had a limited spread.

When a smaller or less important king manages to establish an alliance with a great emperor, naturally it is a matter of great pride and honour for the former. In this case the honour was all the more marked because it was a matrimonial alliance, and the emperor had come to the doorstep of the king instead of the other way round. So, Janak had felt humbled and grateful towards Dasrath.

Dasrath could have refused his permission to his son Lord Ram to marry into a junior family of king Janak because while Dasrath was a Chakravarti king, Janak wasn't. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 which explicitly honours Dasrath as being a 'Chakravarti King'. That he didn't and instead had himself come to attend the marriage at Janakpur made Janak overwhelmed with gratitude and exceptionally obliged and honoured.

In this context, please refer to the notes appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 286 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

पूजे भूपति सकल बराती । समधी सम सादर सब भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
 आसन उचित दिए सब काहू । कहौं काह मुख एक उछाहू ॥ ४ ॥
 सकल बरात जनक सनमानी । दान मान बिनती बर बानी ॥ ५ ॥

pūjē bhūpati sakala barātī. samadhī sama sādara saba bhāmī. 3.
 āsana ucita di'ē saba kāhū. kahaum kāha mukha ēka uchāhū. 4.
 sakala barāta janaka sanamānī. dāna māna binatī bara bānī. 5.

After this, the king (Janak) duly offered his respects and worshipped all the rest of the members of the marriage party in all possible ways, with the same sincerity and diligence as he had offered to his son-in-law's father (i.e. king Dasrath). [In other words, every member of the bridegroom's party felt equally honoured as they were given equal treatment by Janak who did not allow even one of them to feel that he has been neglected or discriminated on account of rank or status in society.] (3)

He offered each one of them an appropriate seat¹. [Tulsidas says—] How can I describe the happiness and joy of those moments with a single mouth²? (4)

Janak honoured the whole of the marriage party with ample gifts, showing of respect, offering of prayers to them, and exchanging pleasantries in sweet words with all its members³. (5)

[Note—¹We see here that though Janak had shown equal respect to every member of the marriage party as clearly said in verse no. 2, he chose to give them 'appropriate seats', i.e. seats that were in accordance to their stature and position in the royal hierarchy and society. This was necessary because showing equal respect to them was to honour all of them as welcome guests, but it was impractical to seat the king and his close family members with the ministers and courtiers and other members of his staff. That would be incredulous even to imagine, and tantamount to insulting and undermining the high stature of the king as well as blatant violation of royal protocol.

That is why Janak has been called a 'wise and prudent' king in Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 320 herein above.

We shall read below that when the marriage party was invited by Janak to the grand wedding feast, there also he had first shown great respect to them by laying out a red-carpet welcome for them and washing their feet, and after that escorting them to their seats which were arranged in accordance to strict norms of social protocol—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 328.

²Earlier, Tulsidas has used the instance of the happiness and joy that surged in the heart of Sunayana, the mother of Sita, when she saw Lord Ram dressed up as a groom to say that she was so delighted and euphoric that even Seshnath, the legendary serpent with a thousand hoods, and therefore a thousand mouths and tongues, and goddess Sarda, the

patron goddess of speech, would be unable to describe it even in thousands of years. Refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 318.

This is a standard practice adopted by Tulsidas—that when he wants to emphasise the immensity of some event or situation he says that one mouth or one tongue is insufficient to describe it. In simple words it means that words cannot narrate the truth and reality of a certain happening, they cannot fully transcribe the depth and dimension of the event because words have their own lingual limitations.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.]

बिधि हरि हरु दिसिपति दिनराऊ । जे जानहिं रघुबीर प्रभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥
कपट बिप्र बर बेष बनाएँ । कौतुक देखहिं अति सचु पाएँ ॥ ७ ॥
पूजे जनक देव सम जानें । दिए सुआसन बिनु पहिचानें ॥ ८ ॥

bidhi hari haru disipati dinarā'ū. jē jānahiṁ raghubīra prabhā'ū. 6.
kapaṭa bipra bara bēṣa banā'ēm̐. kautuka dēkhahiṁ ati sacu pā'ēm̐. 7.
pūjē janaka dēva sama jānēm̐. di'ē su'āsana binu pahicānēm̐. 8.

The Creator Vidhi (or Bidhi; i.e. Brahma), Hari (Vishnu), Har (Shiva), the Dikpals (custodians of all the ten directions of the world¹), and the Sun God—these gods and the rest of the gods who knew about the divine glories of Lord Ram (and the fact that he was an incarnate supreme Lord of creation) [6]—all of them assumed illusionary human forms as Brahmins to witness the divine spectacle and derive immense delight from it [7]. (6-7)

King Janak duly worshipped and honoured all these Brahmins, treating them to be equivalent to gods (though he did not realize that they were not ordinary Brahmins but actual gods in their forms). Janak worshipped them equally (because he was unaware of their true identity), and then he gave all of them comfortable seats#@². (8)

[Note—¹The 'Dikpals' are the following—Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called 'Sahastraaksha', Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Niritiya (also known as Nairitya), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God, Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods and upon whom the supreme Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean (the word also refers to Vishnu himself in his infinite form as the Viraat Purush). Refer: *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse nos. 38-39.

²All the gods had assumed illusionary forms of Brahmins, and all of them looked exactly alike. So, Janak could not know about their true identity, but nonetheless he worshipped all of them equally with due diligence. Then he seated them on seats that were all alike. In other words, Janak treated all the Brahmins equally, treating them as personified forms of gods, and therefore he neither discriminated in showing his respects to them, nor in the way he seated them.

Janak had not realized that the Brahmins he was worshipping and praying were not human beings, but were actually all the great gods in their forms. This was indeed a rare privilege for Janak because when one does any religious activity, he invokes the gods to

come and accept his worship and offerings, but it is rare that the gods would actually come personally in physical form to accept the offerings and worship. If the worshipper's devotion, sincerity and spiritual level are high, the gods do come, but they do so in an invisible and subtle form, not actual physical form. But in the case of Janak this came to happen—the gods came down from the heaven personally to witness the events and participate in them, and to give Janak the honour of physically worshipping them personally.

We will read shortly that the goddesses who had assumed female forms and had also entered the household of Janak to be with Sita and accompany her to the marriage pavilion and throughout the marriage ceremony were also not recognized by anyone present there—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 322 below.

We have already read above that Janak had not distinguished between anyone while offering his respects to each member of the groom's party. When one worships, he usually keeps his sight low and concentrates his attention on the process of worshipping instead of looking up and staring at the face of the person or the deity honoured, because if he does so it would be wrong and equivalent to showing disrespect to the person or the deity worshipped. So, Janak could not realize, and neither did he had the time to scrutinize each member's identity to decide as to who was a human and who was a god amongst the large group of members of the marriage party whom he had to show individual attention and offer formal respects before the marriage rituals could get underway. Time was passing away fast, so he wanted to be done with this formal process of welcoming as quickly as possible so that the main function could start.

#An interesting principle emerges in this narration. When one shows his respects to the elders, the learned ones and honourable people in the society, one should not distinguish between them on the basis of caste, religion or creed. One must respect their excellent qualities, characters, knowledge, skills and good virtues rather than in which class they are born, or the colour of their skin, or their financial status, and so on.

The same thing applies to guests: all of them are equal and should be equally treated. No guest should be regarded as being inconsequential and less important than the others because one can never know which of these guests will be so pleased by his hospitality and feel obliged to him that later on in life when the host falls on bad times and needs some kind of help, the same humblest-amongst-the-guests would come forward to repay his moral debt to his former host by extending him support and giving him aid to the best of his ability and means at a time when the former host needs it most.

@Another interesting observation is this: Janak had not distinguished between the sages and seers when he worshipped them and seated them as narrated in Doha no. 320 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4. Once again he has worshipped and seated all the Brahmins equally as narrated in the present Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above.

But though Janak had shown equal respect to all the members of the royal family of king Dasrath and the rest of the entourage consisting of the members of the marriage party, but when it came to allotting them seats he was very careful, and all the members were allotted seats that were individually appropriate for them. This is clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 321.

Now, what does this mean? It simply means that Janak was a very wise and intelligent king (refer: Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 320) who knew very well the royal protocol, as well as the established customs and traditions of the society. He knew that all the members of a group of sages and seers as well as Brahmins should be treated equally, and that when each group is seated a similar seat is to be given to all the members of that group. But this does not apply to others. For members of the royal marriage party care was to be taken to respect royal hierarchy and position of the

concerned person in the kingdom. For instance, it would be nonsense to seat a junior minister of the royal court alongside the king while his chief minister is given a seat far away! Likewise, a servant of the royal household cannot be expected to be seated alongside the master whom he serves.]

छं०. पहिचान को केहि जान सबहि अपान सुधि भोरी भई । १ ।
 आनंद कंदु बिलोकि दूलहु उभय दिसि आनंद मई ॥ २ ॥
 सुर लखे राम सुजान पूजे मानसिक आसन दए । ३ ।
 अवलोकि सीलु सुभाउ प्रभु को बिबुध मन प्रमुदित भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pahicāna kō kēhi jāna sabahi apāna sudhi bhōrī bha'ī. 1.
 ānanda kandu bilōki dūlahu ubhaya disi ānamda ma'ī. 2.
 sura lakhē rāma sujāna pūjē mānasika āsana da'ē. 3.
 avalōki sīlu subhā'u prabhu kō bibudha mana pramudita bha'ē. 4.

Who had the inclination or the time to find out about others and recognize who they were when everyone was so ecstatic and lost in surging joy that they had lost awareness of their own selves? (1)

[This is because—] Both the sides (i.e. the bridegroom's side and the bride's side) were very jubilant and euphoric as they watched the groom (Lord Ram) who was a personified form of bliss and happiness. (2)

When the wise Lord Ram saw and recognized the gods (who were disguised as Brahmins and seated with other members of the marriage party), he mentally worshipped them all, and then offered them symbolic seats to show respect to them^{#1}. (3)

When the gods observed how Lord Ram had mentally worshipped and showed his respects to them, all of them felt delighted and praised the gentle manners, the courteous nature and the congenial temperament of the Lord². (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹Lord Ram could recognize the gods because he was the Supreme God to whom all the rest of the gods paid their obeisance. It was on their request that he had decided to become a human being to free the earth of its burden of cruel demons. Lord Ram had divine penetrating sight that was able to transcend human boundaries and limitations of vision. So the Lord could see who the Brahmins actually were, that they were gods in their forms, whereas Janak could not recognize them.

We have already read that goddesses had also assumed the form of women-folk and quietly slipped in to mingle with the female members of Janak's household to closely enjoy and participate in the marriage rituals of Sita and Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318.

When one worships one's deity, he prays to the latter, and then offers the deity a seat so that it can be seated respectfully. Lord Ram mentally worshipped all the gods who were present on the occasion in the form of Brahmins, and then he offered them symbolic seats to show his respects to them. The occasion was formal, and the Lord could not get up from his seat to overtly welcome the gods. So he welcomed them in a symbolic way at the mental level.

#A very interesting thing is to be noted here. Lord Ram has offered his mental respects to the gods who had come to attend his marriage ceremony in the form of Brahmins as narrated in the present Chanda no. 3, but the Lord did not do so with the other sages and seers such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and Vamdeo etc. This would be clear if we read relevant verses once again, viz. Doha no. 320 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it. The question is—why did Lord Ram not pay his respects to these sages and seers as he had done with the gods? The answer is to be found earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 308. Lord Ram pays his due respect to sage Vasistha and all the other sages, seers and Brahmins who had come with the marriage party along with his father Dasrath at the time the Lord had met them when he had gone to meet his father. The gods had not accompanied Dasrath from Ayodhya, but they came directly to the marriage pavilion. Hence, there was actually no necessity for showing respect to these sages and seers again because they had already been duly respected. Repeating the same process would be too superfluous. On the other hand, since the gods had come for the first time, the Lord felt it necessary to show them his respects, which he does in the present verse.

²Lord Ram was the lord of the world, and as such there was no real necessity for him to offer his worship to these gods who were much junior to him in the hierarchy of the heaven and of creation at large. But the Lord did it because of his polite nature, to show to the world that anyone in the form of a Brahmin must be shown respect, and also because he thought that he must thank the gods for coming to his marriage function.]

दो०. रामचंद्र मुख चंद्र छबि लोचन चारु चकोर ।
करत पान सादर सकल प्रेमु प्रमोदु न थोर ॥ ३२१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmacandra mukha candra chabi lōcana cāru cakōra.
karata pāna sādara sakala prēmu pramōdu na thōra. 321.

Everyone present on the occasion gazed unblinkingly at the beautiful and graceful moon-like face of Sri Ram-Chandra¹, drinking cheerfully and with the greatest of affection drank the nectar of beauty that dripped from it and deriving immense pleasure from it just as the Chakor bird watches enraptured at the moon and derives intense happiness from it. (Doha no. 321)

[Note—¹The selection of the name ‘Ram-Chandra’ for Lord Ram fits in excellently with the metaphor of the moon and the bird Chakor used in this Doha. The word “Chandra” prepares the reader to visualize the Lord’s face as being equivalent to the moon. Just as this bird Chakor gazes with great affection at the full moon, all those present at the venue watched Lord Ram most lovingly. Again, just as the Chakor not willing to look at anything else as long as the moon shines in the sky, and following the course of the moon as it traverses across the sky from the eastern to the western horizon, all those who were present at the venue kept their eyes fixed on Lord Ram, following each of his movements so transfixed were they as they watched the beautiful form of the Lord.]

चौ०. समउ बिलोकि बसिष्ठ बोलाए । सादर सतानंदु सुनि आए ॥ १ ॥

बेगि कुअँरि अब आनहु जाई । चले मुदित मुनि आयसु पाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sama'u bilōki basiṣṭha bōlā'ē. sādara satānandu suni ā'ē. 1.
bēgi ku'amri aba ānahu jā'ī. calē mudita muni āyasu pā'ī. 2.

When Vasistha (the royal priest of king Dasrath and the one who presided over the marriage rituals, representing the groom's side) saw that the auspicious time for the wedding rituals has arrived, he respectfully called in Satanand (the royal priest of king Janak, who would assist Vasistha and represent the bride's family during the rituals). When Satanand heard the call (that he is being summoned by Vasistha), he came there, showing due respect too (to Vasistha). (1)

Vasistha requested him—'Bring the bride soon (as the time for the performance of the rites has arrived)'.

When Satanand heard this instruction of the sage, he immediately went from there with a gladdened heart (to go and usher in the bride, Sita). (2)

[Note—After everyone was duly seated and the auspicious moment arrived, sage Vasistha summoned his counterpart, sage Satanand, and requested him to bring the bride to the pavilion at the earliest so the rituals of the marriage can be commenced. Satanand was waiting for this instruction, so he felt very happy.]

रानी सुनि उपरोहित बानी । प्रमुदित सखिन्ह समेत सयानी ॥ ३ ॥

बिप्र बधू कुलबृद्ध बोलाई । करि कुल रीति सुमंगल गाई ॥ ४ ॥

rānī suni uparōhita bānī. pramudita sakhinha samēta sayānī. 3.
bipra badhū kulabṛd'dha bōlā'īm. kari kula rīti sumāṅgala gā'īm. 4.

When the wise and intelligent queen¹ heard the words of the royal priest (Satanand), she, along with her companions, was exuberant with joy. (3)

She summoned wives of Brahmins (of the kingdom) and elder female members of the family. All joined together in properly completing the different customs and traditional rites of the family and the society even as they sang auspicious songs befitting the joyful occasion. (2)

[Note—¹As with the case of king Janak, queen Sunayan is also 'wise and intelligent'. She knows the way such occasions are to be properly handled. She maintains her calm and poise; she summons not only the Brahmin wives but also the elders of the family, neglecting none. All of them joined hands in completing the formalities and rituals so that nothing was missed out. If one lady forgot something, others stepped in to complete the process.

There is another reason for calling the queen 'wise and intelligent'. We shall read in the next couple of verses (Chaupai line nos. 5-7 herein below) how the different consorts of gods, known as the 'Shaktis', had assumed the form of human females and entered the royal household imperceptibly to join in the celebrations and participate in the performance of rituals that are exclusively done by the female members of the bride's family. At that time the queen had recognized these divine consorts of various gods, and

had honoured them with the same respect as she would have extended to the senior goddesses such Uma, Rama and Sarda, though others present on the occasion could not recognize them. This clearly indicates that the queen was intelligent and wise enough to quickly recognize some divine traits in some of the ladies in her group and determine that they were not human beings but some divine Being in human form. So, inspite of not knowing the identity of each single goddess, she nevertheless decided to honour all of them equally and with the same reverence as she would show to senior goddesses.]

नारि बेष जे सुर बर बामा । सकल सुभायँ सुंदरी स्यामा ॥ ५ ॥

तिन्हहि देखि सुखु पावहिं नारीं । बिनु पहिचानि प्रानहु ते प्यारीं ॥ ६ ॥

बार बार सनमानहिं रानी । उमा रमा सारद सम जानी ॥ ७ ॥

nāri bēṣa jē sura bara bāmā. sakala subhāyam̐ sundarī syāmā. 5.

tinahahi dēkhi sukhu pāvahiṁ nārīṁ. binu pahicāni prānahu tē pyārīṁ. 6.

bāra bāra sanamānahiṁ rānī. umā ramā sārada sama jānī. 7.

All the different Shaktis (i.e. the goddesses; the consorts) of gods who had assumed the form of human females (like the gods themselves who had also assumed the form of Brahmins) to join in the celebrations, looked naturally lovely and youthful to behold¹. (5)

The women-folk of the royal household, including the elders, as well as the wives of Brahmins (who had been invited by the queen to participate in the marriage ceremony) felt delighted to see them (i.e. the Shaktis in human forms) in their midst. Though they could not recognize these Shaktis², they nevertheless developed a natural bond of love and affection for them so much so that began to hold them dearer than their own lives. (6)

The queen repeatedly showed her respects to them and regarded them as being equivalent to personified forms of Uma (the divine consort of Lord Shiva), Rama (goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu) and Sarada (goddess Saraswati, the divine consort of Brahma, the creator)³. (7)

[Note—¹When the gods descended upon earth in the form of humans, disguised as Brahmins, to join in the celebrations accompanying Lord Ram's marriage, their counterparts, the 'Shaktis' or the different goddesses, too decided to join them. So these Shaktis assumed the form of females and entered the household of Janak.

Remember: The senior goddesses such as Uma, Rama and Sarda had already come to join the royal family as clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318. These senior goddesses had accompanied the queen when she escorted Lord Ram to the pavilion—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 319.

So this means that these goddesses were present in the marriage pavilion to attend to the groom because it is a tradition that once the groom enters the pavilion and gets seated, he is not left alone but is attended by some of the female members of the bride's side. Therefore, when Satanand asked the queen to get Sita ready and send her to the pavilion, the rites that were to be performed prior to Sita going to the pavilion were immediately, and the junior goddesses helped the queen complete them.

These goddesses would then not only escort Sita to the pavilion but accompany her throughout the ceremony because they decided to assume the role of the bride's friends.

²Besides these Shaktis in human forms, there was a large number of ladies present on the occasion, such as wives of Brahmins, both young and elderly female members of the

royal household, and other ladies who had been invited as guests. None of them could recognize these goddesses; none could know that some of the members of the crowd are not humans but divine Beings.

³The fact that the queen could realize that some members of the ladies' group are consorts of various gods, something others could not, is the reason why she has been honoured as being 'wise and intelligent' in Chaupai line no. 3 herein above. Once she recognized these special members of the group, she honoured them and treated them with the same respect as she would have done with Uma, Laxmi and Saraswati who are the three senior-most goddesses in the heavenly hierarchy of goddesses because they are the divine consorts of senior gods Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma respectively.]

सीय सँवारि समाजु बनाई । मुदित मंडपहिं चलीं लवाई ॥ ८ ॥

sīya samvāri samāju banā'ī. mudita maṇḍapahim calīm lavā'ī. 8.

These female friends decorated Sita beautifully in fine bridal gear, adorning her in all the best of finery, and in all possible ways. Then they formed a group around her and cheerfully escorted her to the marriage pavilion. (8)

[Note—Who were these friends of Sita who adorned her and accompanied her to the marriage pavilion? Well, the answer is obvious—'the Shaktis of the various gods who had assumed human female forms' as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 above.

Elderly ladies are not expected to accompany a bride to her marriage pavilion, and so are the wives of Brahmins who too are not expected to do so. Brahmin women are respected but they cannot act as 'friends' of the bride because this role is like an attendant who has to take care of everything related to bride, such as holding her hands, picking up her garments if they drag on the ground or get stuck somewhere, helping her with the manual tasks associated with the elaborate rituals, and so on.

Hence, the group of ladies that escorted Sita to the pavilion consisted of the goddesses who had come to attend the ceremony disguised as human beings.]

छं०. चलि ल्याइ सीतहि सखीं सादर सजि सुमंगल भामिनीं । १ ।
नवसप्त साजें सुंदरीं सब मत्त कुंजर गामिनीं ॥ २ ॥
कल गान सुनि मुनि ध्यान त्यागहिं काम कोकिल लाजहीं । ३ ।
मंजीर नूपुर कलित कंकन ताल गति बर बाजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

cali lyā'i sītahi sakhīm sādara saji sumāṅgala bhāminīm. 1.
navasapta sājēm sundarīm saba matta kunjara gāminīm. 2.
kala gāna suni muni dhyāna tyāgahim kāma kōkila lājahīm. 3.
mañjīra nūpura kalita kaṅkana tāla gati bara bājahīm. 4.

Sita's friends and other ladies collected auspicious materials needed for the occasion and respectfully escorted Sita to the pavilion. (1)

All of them, the friends as well as the ladies who had accompanied Sita, were fully decorated in all the sixteen types of adornments traditionally regarded as complete

decoration of a female body¹. All of them were lovely to look at and walked with a graceful gait that resembled the confident majestic swagger with which an adult healthy elephant walks. (2)

They sang with such a sweet voice and melodious tone that when sages and hermits heard them their meditation was disturbed (i.e. they could not remain aloof to such charming songs and attractive voices, and failed to maintain their concentration during meditation)².

Likewise, the cuckoo³ that represented Kamdeo or cupid (the god who excelled in casting his spell of charm and passion on others by a variety of means, and singing sweet songs was one of the methods he used) felt shamed and humbled by the sweetness and the mellifluous nature of the songs that these ladies sang. (3)

As these ladies walked, the pleasant sound of tinkling and clinking that emanated from their anklets, their waist-bands, and the bangles that they wore worn around their wrists, resonated perfectly with the tune of their songs⁴. (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 297 in this context.

²We can read this part of the verse as follows—“When the sages and hermits heard these ladies singing in a sweet and mellifluous tone, they found it hard to maintain their concentration and remain indifferent to the inherent charm of the songs. As a result they felt obliged to forego their meditation and listen to the songs instead.”

Well, this is just a way to highlight the sweetness and the beauty of the way the marriage songs were being sung, and not to actually refer to any sage or hermit whose meditation was disturbed at that time by hearing of these songs. Remember that it was the marriage pavilion, and not a hermitage in the forest where any sage or hermit could be imagined to be meditating! It's simply a figure of speech to describe the pleasant environment of the occasion where the sound of soft music and sweet songs wafted soothingly through the atmosphere much like the case of sweet fragrance of flowers in full bloom that completely permeates the surroundings in a garden to welcome a guest warmly.

³The cuckoo is reputed to be a bird with a sweet voice. The companions of Sita sang so melodiously that even the cuckoo felt humbled and abashed because it was no match for the way these ladies sang. All its pride and reputation as the bird with the sweetest voice was crushed and set aside.

⁴It appeared that these ornaments took up the role of musical instruments as no such instrument is mentioned here. Music and song go hand-in-hand, and if one is absent the other loses its charm. They are complimentary to each other. When the ladies walked, these ornaments shook and rubbed against each other, producing a rustling sound. Tiny bells that were attached to the anklets, the waist bands and the bangles also chimed sweetly. The net affect was that together they produced a sound that filled in the vacuum created by the absence of formal musical instruments.

Hence, the soft sound coming out of the ornaments worn by the ladies complimented the songs they sang, and for all practical purposes they provided the music component of the songs.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 230 where the ornaments of Sita are described when she came to the garden where Lord Ram and Laxman had first seen her.

Similarly, when the ladies of Janakpur had gone to welcome Lord Ram as he arrived on his horse for the wedding ceremonies, the same type of ornaments are mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318.

Refer also to “Geetawali”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 18, stanza no. 5, line no. 2.]

दो०. सोहति बनित बृंद महँ सहज सुहावनि सीय ।
छबि ललना गन मध्य जनु सुषमा तिय कमनीय ॥ ३२२ ॥

dōhā.

sōhati banitā br̥nda mahum̐ sahaja suhāvani sīya.
chabi lalanā gana madhya janu suṣamā tiya kamanīya. 322.

Sita, who was inherently endowed with natural beauty of exceptional finesse, looked most magnificent and fabulous in the midst of lovely ladies who were themselves most charming and attractive as if the virtues of beauty, finesse, refinement, grace and magnificence have personified themselves in the form of Sita to take a pride of place amongst a horde of such glorious qualities which too had taken human forms as the companions of Sita. (Doha no. 322)

[Note—What an excellent analogy indeed. All virtues are excellent in themselves, but each individual person possesses them in varying degrees, and no two individuals in this mortal gross world can be expected to have exactly the same degree of excellence and divine virtues in them. So this Doha means that all the companions of Sita were beautiful—remember, they were personified forms of goddesses and other divine Beings as clearly indicated in Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede this Doha no. 322, and therefore there is no doubt that they were beautiful—but their beauty and magnificence was a notch inferior to that of Sita. Remember that Sita was a personified form of the Shakti of Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of all gods and creation. She therefore personified the best of all virtues in their finest forms.

Let us understand this verse with an example. It is like the case of a collection of golden ornaments—one piece has 24 carate gold of the finest variety, the finest refinement with no impurities, while the other samples also have gold but of slightly low fineness besides having traces of impurities. Now, externally one would not be able to distinguish between these samples, but an expert would know the difference. When the ornament of the purest gold is kept in a collection of golden ornaments of varying qualities and purities of the metal, how would an expert describe this collection? He would use the same method employed by Tulsidas here to point out the piece of ornament that has the best quality of gold in it.

In simple terms it means that all the ladies were very charming and attractive to look at, but Sita stood out amongst them as being special. This is expected from a practical point of view also—after all, she was the bride, and a bride is especially decorated for such occasions; special attention is obviously paid to her and she is at the center of all activities. The bride looks special in the group of ladies that accompanies her because of her unique bridal adornment and the way she is given special attention and ceremoniously conducted by others.

Thus, Sita looked special in the group of magnificent ladies who escorted her to the marriage pavilion; she became the cynosure of all eyes.]

चौ०. सिय सुंदरता बरनि न जाई । लघु मति बहुत मनोहरताई ॥ १ ॥

आवत दीखि बरातिन्ह सीता । रूप रासि सब भाँति पुनीता ॥ २ ॥
 सबहि मनहिं मन किए प्रनामा । देखि राम भए पूरनकामा ॥ ३ ॥
 हरषे दसरथ सुतन्ह समेता । कहि न जाइ उर आनँदु जेता ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

siya sundaratā barani na jā'ī. laghu mati bahuta manōharatā'ī. 1.
 āvata dīkhi barātinha sītā. rūpa rāsi saba bhām'ti punītā. 2.
 sabahi manahirṁ mana ki'ē pranāmā. dēkhi rāma bha'ē pūranakāmā. 3.
 haraṣē dasaratha sutanha samētā. kahi na jā'i ura ānam'du jētā. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-8 describe the moments when Sita was escorted to the wedding pavilion by her companions.]

The beauty, majesty, elegance, charm and glamour of Sita were so astounding and profound in nature that they defy description. My wit and abilities are very limited and insufficient while her beauty and elegance were so great that it is beyond me to as much as even hint at them in words, let alone describe them and do justice to them¹. (1)

The members of the groom's party watched her mesmerised as she arrived at the venue, in all her royal regalia and finesse. She was an epitome of purity and a treasury of the virtues of beauty, charm, elegance, majesty and glamour of the highest quality. (2)

All of them bowed to her mentally and paid their obeisance to her. Meanwhile, Lord Ram felt fulfilled and happy in his heart when he saw her². (3)

King Dasrath, along with his other sons (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan), felt very happy, and the extent of joy in his heart was so immense that it is not possible to describe it in words³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 230 which say that when Lord Ram had first seen Sita in the royal garden he was stunned by her beauty and charm. (ii) Again, everyone was dumbfounded by her beauty when she came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Later on in the story of the Ram Charit Manas we will read that Lord Ram had himself acknowledged that Sita was a treasury of Gunas (excellent qualities and virtues) as well as of Sundartaa (beauty)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30. This verse refers to the time when Sita was abducted by Ravana and Lord Ram grieved for her.

²Lord Ram felt contented and happy in his heart because he had fulfilled the desire in the heart of Sita to marry him. The Lord, left to his own self, is neutral and dispassionate and very conscientious about his behaviour (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 231, and (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237; (c) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; as well as (d) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 31). But he feels that it is his duty to oblige those who love him and have surrendered themselves to him—and he prefers to go the extra mile for his devotee and those who love him.

Sita had decided that if she has to marry then she will marry Lord Ram and no one else. She had mentally surrendered herself to the Lord and had fervently prayed to goddess Parvati to let this happen—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from

Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 236; (b) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 259 which are very explicit on this subject.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 103—104.

Lord Ram had to honour her determination because the Lord had himself declared that if one surrenders to him completely then he is bound to accept him or her irrespective of all other considerations—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48 in the context of Vibhishan when he had come to surrendered to the Lord and seek his protection, and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram preaches his subjects about the importance of Bhakti or devotion.

³The king and Lord Ram’s other two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, were seeing Sita for the first time. Laxman had already seen her closely every time Lord Ram had the opportunity to see her. Dasrath was happy to see that his daughter-in-law is so holy, pure and beautiful to look at as any father would be, and Bharat and Shatrughan were pleased to have such a nice sister-in-law.

Dasrath’s sons were the most beautiful and handsome princes of the time, and so naturally he expected that his daughter-in-law would also be equally beautiful and charming so that she looks a fitting companion for his beloved son Ram.]

सुर प्रनामु करि बरिसहिं फूला । मुनि असीस धुनि मंगल मूला ॥ ५ ॥

surā pranāmu kari barisahim phūlā. muni asīsa dhuni maṅgala mūlā. 5.

Meanwhile, the gods bowed their heads in reverence and showered flowers upon her. There was a loud chorus of auspicious words of benediction and expression of satisfaction as the learned sages and seers too blessed her simultaneously¹. (5)

[Note—¹When the gods feel delighted, they express their happiness by showering flowers and playing their musical instruments in the heaven, while the elderly sages and seers do so by blessing those with whom they are pleased.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe the scenario at the time when Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion and made to sit down on the designated seat. Here also the gods have showered flowers and the sages and seers have chanted auspicious blessings.]

गान निसान कोलाहलु भारी । प्रेम प्रमोद मगन नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

gāna nisāna kōlāhalu bhārī. prēma pramōda magana nara nārī. 6.

There was a loud symphony of music from melodious songs being sung and kettle-drums being played simultaneously. All the citizens, both the males and the females¹, were overwhelmed with joy and rejoiced at those happy moments. (6)

[Note—¹The words used in the text are ‘males and females’—‘Nar’ and ‘Naari’. The males included the residents of Janakpur as well as those guests who had come from Ayodhya with the marriage party. The females were only those who lived in Janakpur—because females do not accompany marriage parties that go from the groom’s place to the bride’s place.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe the scenario at the time when Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion and made to sit down on the designated seat. We observe that both the moments have been described by Tulsidas using similar language to emphasise that the celebrations and rejoicings had continued uninterrupted from the moment Lord Ram stepped into the pavilion till this moment when Sita came, and they continued henceforth also.

There was dancing and singing in the city. Everyone rejoiced, and the happiness seemed to be infective and all-pervading. The sound was so deafening that one could not hear what others were saying.]

एहि बिधि सीय मंडपहिं आई । प्रमुदित सांति पढ़हिं मुनिराई ॥ ७ ॥

ēhi bidhi sīya maṇḍapahim āī. pramudita sānti paṛhahim munirāī. 7.

In this way, Sita arrived at the marriage pavilion even as the sages and seers read (chanted; uttered) the hymns of the Vedas, known as ‘Shanti Paath’. (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe exactly the same thing when Lord Ram had arrived at the pavilion.

This verse concludes the narration that started in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 322.]

तेहि अवसर कर बिधि व्यवहारू । दुहुँ कुलगुर सब कीन्ह अचारू ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi avasara kara bidhi byavahārū. duhum̐ kulagura saba kīnha acārū. 8.

During those moments, the two Gurus (preceptors) of the two royal families (i.e. sages Vasistha and Satanand who were the royal priests of the kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur respectively, and who were presiding over the rituals on behalf of the two families) performed all the necessary rituals and ceremonies as required to be done in accordance to tradition and custom of the society as well as ordained by the scriptures. (8).

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 302. The entire formal process is detailed in Valmiki’s version of the Ramayana, in its Baal Kand, Canto 73, verse nos. 19—24.

Let us read what these verses say—“The great sage and ascetic Vasistha prepared a sacrificial altar at the center of the pavilion in accordance to the prescription of the scriptures regarding its construction, location and preparation. This altar was duly decorated on all the four sides with flowers and plastered with a paste of sandalwood. After this, fresh sprouts were placed in golden plates, jars of varying colours, and earthen pots and placed around this altar. Other things that were placed around the sacred altar were the following—vessels containing incense and other fragrances, conch-shells that would be sounded at strategic moments as well to be used to place sprouts, wooden spatulas and ladles that would be used to offer libations of clarified butter etc. to the sacred fire during the rituals, other vessels some of which were filled with water to offer as oblations to the different deities who would be worshipped, while others that contained

parched paddy flakes, grains of rice and dried grass upon which the fire would be placed once it is lit.”

Since the rituals are headed by the priest of the groom’s side, sage Vasistha led the ceremonies, and sage Satanand helped him along.]

छं०. आचारु करि गुर गौरि गनपति मुदित बिप्र पुजावहीं । १ ।
सुर प्रगटि पूजा लेहिं देहिं असीस अति सुखु पावहीं ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

ācāru kari gura gauri ganapati mudita bipra pujāvahīm. 1.
sura pragaṭi pūjā lēhīm dēhīm asīsa ati sukhu pāvahīm. 2.

*The Gurus (Vasistha and Satanand) performed all the rituals according to established custom. The Brahmins (who were helping him in the process as his assistants) cheerfully helped him conduct the worship of Gauri (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) and Ganesh (the son of Lord Shiva and the god who is offered first worship during any religious ceremony).

[*This line can be read in a different way as follows—“After the two Gurus completed the initial formalities that are done at the beginning of such ceremonies as marriage, they made the couple, Lord Ram and Sita, worship goddess Gauri, god Ganesh, and other Brahmins who were present there.”

The Brahmins are regarded as being equivalent to gods-on-earth, as the ‘Mahi-surs’ = earth + god, so they are universally worshipped with the same reverence as shown to gods of the heaven. Worshipping Brahmins is treated as offering obeisance to personified gods.^{1]} (1)

The gods who were invoked for the purpose of worship actually manifested themselves to personally accept the offerings. While doing so, they profusely blessed and showered their benediction (on the couple, Lord Ram and Sita)^{2].} (2) [Chanda line nos. 1-2.]

Note—¹Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 295 where we have read how the queen-mothers had offered their respects to the Brahmins at Ayodhya when they learnt about Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita; and (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 where king Janak has offered his worship to the gods who were disguised as Brahmins.

These Brahmins are referred to as being personified forms of Gods on earth, the “Mahi-surs”—refer: Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319. This is based on the fact that when the gods and goddesses wished to assume human forms to come down to earth to participate in the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, they chose to become Brahmins—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.

We shall read below in Doha no. 323 that even the Vedas had assumed the form of Brahmins to take active part in the ceremonies.

²We have already read that the three chief gods, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, along with the patron gods of all the directions as well as the Sun God had disguised themselves

as Brahmins who were worshipped by Janak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.

The gods were willing to accept the worship and the offering as they felt very honoured and lucky to be a part of the celebrations that marked the union of the cosmic Lord in the human form of Lord Ram with his Shakti in the form of Sita. It was a rare conjunction and a rare phenomenon. Everyone wanted to be part of this history-in-the-making.]

मधुपर्क मंगल द्रव्य जो जेहि समय मुनि मन महँ चाहैं । ३ ।

भरे कनक कोपर कलस सो तब लिएहिं परिचारक रहैं ॥ ४ ॥

madhuparka maṅgala drabya jō jēhi samaya muni mana mahum̐ चाहैं. 3.
bharē kanaka kōpara kalasa sō taba li'ēhim̐ paricāraka rahaim̐. 4.

Whatever sweets (known as “Madhu-purk”¹) and auspicious items that were needed for the rituals² by the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were performing the marriage rites) were instantly made available to them whenever they asked for them by the attendants who stood ready with golden pots and pitchers filled with such requirements. (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹“Madhu-purk” = This is a sweet concoction made from curd, honey, clarified butter, water and sugar, a total of 5 ingredients. This mixture is offered to deities during worship, and to honourable guests when they arrive at the host’s doorstep.

²Many things are needed during the course of the rituals—such as water from different pilgrim places and holy rivers, various other assorted offerings that are to be made to the fire sacrifice, such as sandalwood, fragrances and incense, Kush grass, clarified butter, honey, herbs of different kinds, firewood and so on. All these things were kept ready and dedicated attendants stood at attention to provide them to the two priests as and when they were required.]

कुल रीति प्रीति समेत रबि कहि देत सबु सादर कियो । ५ ।

एहि भाँति देव पुजाइ सीतहि सुभग सिंघासनु दियो ॥ ६ ॥

kula rīti prīti samēta rabi kahi dēta sabu sādara kiyō. 5.
ēhi bhām̐ti dēva puja'ī sītahi subhaga siṅghāsanu diyō. 6.

The Sun God (who was the patron deity of the Solar Race to which Lord Ram belonged) himself directed the rituals by giving advice and pointing out which rite was to be performed when, and how it was to be done. The priests obeyed his instructions and performed the rituals as directed by the Sun God. (5)

In this way, after the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were presiding the ceremony) made Sita offer worship to the gods, she was made to sit down on the designated magnificent throne (seat) that was reserved for her. (6) [Chanda line nos. 5-6.]

[Note—Verse no. 6 implies that till this point, the rituals that were done were the initial ones that are performed when the bride enters the pavilion, and they were all done while

she was standing. Once this was completed, Sita was escorted to the seat reserved for her.]

सिय राम अवलोकनि परसपर प्रेमु काहु न लखि परै । ७ ।
मन बुद्धि बर बानी अगोचर प्रगट कबि कैसें करै ॥ ८ ॥

siya rāma avalōkani parasapara prēmu kāhu na lakhi parai. 7.
mana bud'dhi bara bānī agōcara pragaṭa kabi kaisēm karai. 8.

The subtle love that flowed between Lord Ram and Sita as they affectionately glanced at each other was so sublime in dimension that it was imperceptible to others (i.e. those present on the occasion could not realise that they were looking at each other secretly, by the corners of their eyes, and these glances filled both of them with love and affection of the purest kind for each other). (7)

It was beyond the grasp and understanding of the best of mind, intellect and speech. Say then, how can a humble poet ever describe it or even as much as come near to its depth, intensity, purity and dimension. (8) [Chanda line nos.7-8.]

[Note—In other words, even the wisest men present on that occasion could not fathom the dimension, the depth and the intensity of the sublime quality of love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Sita at that time. This being the case, Tulsidas says that he is unable to narrate it because he is merely an ordinary poet of no great expertise with words or intelligent enough to fathom it. This observation of Tulsidas points to his sense of humility and modesty.

Besides this aspect of his character, he also refrains from describing the love and affection between Lord Ram and Sita because he treats the Lord as his revered deity and god, and so would not like to say anything that may be indecent, look immodest, and violative of norms of the society which require that love and affection between married couples are their private and personal affair, and should not be the subject of public scrutiny or comment as it would be indecent and uncivilised by nature to do so, and intrusive as well.]

दो०. होम समय तनु धरि अनलु अति सुख आहुति लेहिं ।
बिप्र बेष धरि बेद सब कहि बिबाह बिधि देहिं ॥ ३२३ ॥

dōhā.

hōma samaya tanu dhari analu ati sukha āhuti lēhim.
bipra bēṣa dhari bēda saba kahi bibāha bidhi dēhim. 323.

At the time of offering libations to the sacred fire, the Fire God revealed himself personally to accept the offerings very cheerfully.

Meanwhile, the Vedas assumed the form of Brahmins to give detailed instructions and help conduct all the rituals personally. (Doha no. 323)

[Note—So we see here that besides the gods, even the Vedas and other scriptures had personified themselves as Brahmins to help with the rituals.

While the other gods who had assumed human forms had done so participate in the divine ceremony and rejoice the events, the Vedas assumed the role of priests that actually do the rituals. This ensured that every step was done to perfection.]

चौ०. जनक पाटमहिषी जग जानी । सीय मातु किमि जाइ बखानी ॥ १ ॥
सुजसु सुकृत सुख सुंदरताई । सब समेटि बिधि रची बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

janaka pāṭamahīṣī jaga jānī. sīya mātu kimi jā'i bakhānī. 1.
sujasu sukr̥ta sukha suṇḍaratā'ī. saba samēṭi bidhi racī banā'ī. 2.

The queen¹ of king Janak (named Sunayana) is well-known in the world (for her virtuousness and excellent qualities). Say, who can describe her glories, especially when she has the rare honour to be the mother of Sita². (1)

It appears that Vidhi (the Creator) had collected all the glories, all the meritorious deeds, all the happiness and bliss, as well as beauty and majesty that he had created in this world and moulded them in her form. [In other words, the queen was a personified form of all these qualities.]³ (2)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for Sita's mother is “pāṭamahīṣī”, which means the queen who sits with the king on the throne, and who is the 2nd in line of command after the king himself. The word technically means a ‘chief queen’, but no account is available that Janak had more than one wife as compared to his counterpart, king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram and son-in-law of Janak, who had three senior queens—Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. In the case of Dasrath, the position of the “Paat-Mahisi” belonged to Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram.

²Sita is a personified form of ‘Shakti’, the dynamic cosmic powers of the supreme Lord. To be known as the ‘mother of this Shakti’ is indeed a rare honour. Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 16 which praises Kaushalya in similar terms for getting the honour to become the ‘mother of Lord Ram’, the Lord of creation. Even Janak, the worldly father of Sita, has this unique privilege, and is duly acknowledged in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310.

³Similar praise has been given to the parents of Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 16 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.]

समउ जानि मुनिबरन्ह बोलाई । सुनत सुआसिनि सादर ल्याई ॥ ३ ॥
जनक बाम दिसि सोह सुनयना । हिमगिरि संग बनी जनु मयना ॥ ४ ॥

sama'u jāni munibaranha bōlā'īm. sunata su'āsini sādara lyā'īm. 3.
janaka bāma disi sōha sunayanā. himagiri saṅga banī janu mayanā. 4.

When the appropriate time arrived (i.e. when the mother of the bride's presence was felt necessary in the conduction of the rituals), the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were

conducting these rituals as presiding priests) called for her. When the virtuous companions and friends of the queen got this summon, they cheerfully escorted her to the pavilion. (3)

Sunayana sat by the left side of Janak, and the couple looked as glorious and majestic as when Mayana had sat by the side of Himgiri (during the wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvati, the divine Mother of creation)¹. (4)

[Note—¹This entire episode of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati) is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 103.

More specific verses that describe exclusively the divine marriage of Shiva with Parvati appear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101.

Mayana was Parvati's mother, and Himgiri, the king of the snow-covered Mountains, was her father. During the process of the wedding rites, both the parents of the bride must sit together at the time of the crucial phase known as "Kanyaa-Daan", which literally means 'donating or giving away the girl'. A detailed note on this ritual is appended to Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein below.]

कनक कलस मनि कोपर रूरे । सुचि सुगंध मंगल जल पूरे ॥ ५ ॥
निज कर मुदित रायँ अरु रानी । धरे राम के आगें आनी ॥ ६ ॥

kanaka kalasa mani kōpara rūrē. suci sugandha maṅgala jala pūrē. 5.
nija kara mudita rāyam̐ aru rānī. dharē rāma kē āgēm̐ ānī. 6.

Golden pitchers that were filled with auspicious water that was scented and had been brought from pilgrim places, and were covered on the mouths with plates full to the top with priceless gems¹ [5], were brought by the king and queen with their own hands and placed before Lord Ram (as part of the rituals) [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹The plates full of gems were used as lids for the pitchers filled with holy water brought from pilgrim places and scented by addition of fragrances.

There is another way of interpreting and reading verse no. 5. The plates were studded with gems and made of gold. These were to be used to wash the feet of the groom as part of the rituals. The scented water in the golden pitchers was to be used for this washing. The plates were used as lids to cover the mouths of the pitchers, but when the washing was to start they would be placed below the feet of the groom and the water from the nozzle or the spout of the pitcher would be poured on the feet. The water that flowed would be collected in the plates with high rims. In this interpretation, this verse no. 5 would read as follows—"Golden pitchers were filled with auspicious water that was scented and had been brought from pilgrim places, and they were covered on their mouths with golden plates that were studded with gems [5]".]

पढ़हिं बेद मुनि मंगल बानी । गगन सुमन झरि अवसरु जानी ॥ ७ ॥
बरु बिलोकि दंपति अनुरागे । पाय पुनीत पखारन लागे ॥ ८ ॥

parhahim bēda muni maṅgala bānī. gagana sumana jhari avasaru jānī. 7.
baru bilōki dampati anurāgē. pāya punīta pakhārana lāgē. 8.

The sages read (chanted; incanted) auspicious hymns from the Vedas, and the gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven) when they found that the time was right for this¹. (7)

The royal couple (king Janak and queen Sunayana) watched the groom (Lord Ram) very affectionately and lovingly, deriving immense delight from it. Then they began washing his clean (i.e. holy, divine, venerable, pure and august) feet². (8)

[Note—¹The gods had showered flowers on each and every occasion that demanded it—this is clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319. There are countless such occasions mentioned in the context of Lord Ram's marriage. Some of these are the following—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Doha no. 285; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (vii) Doha no. 324 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 7; (viii) Chanda line no. 54 that precedes Doha no. 327.

This is the gods' way of showing honour and delight.

²Lord Ram and Sita were personified forms of the supreme Lord and his divine Shakti, or of Brahm and Mother Nature, respectively. Their sight was sufficient to make even those ascetics and hermits who remained submerged in meditation and the thoughts of Brahm, the super Consciousness, which gave them intense bliss and contentedness that comes with self-realisation, forego this, and instead enjoy the nectar-like bliss that comes by seeing the divine form of Lord Ram and Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

छं०. लागे पखारन पाय पंकज प्रेम तन पुलकावली । १ ।

नभ नगर गान निसान जय धुनि उमगि जनु चहुँ दिसि चली ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

lāgē pakhārana pāya paṅkaja prēma tana pulakāvalī. 1.
nabha nagara gāna nisāna jaya dhuni umagi janu cahum̐disi calī. 2.

[This Chanda consisting of 16 lines describing the ritual of “Kanyaa-Daan” whereby the parents of the bride formally tie her knot with the groom, handing her to the groom in marriage amidst a lot of fanfare and celebrations.]

The royal couple (the queen and the king) began washing the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord (Sri Ram) with so much love and affection that their bodies were thrilled and goose-bumps appeared on them¹. (Chand line no. 1)

The sky and the city were filled with the symphonic sound of melodious songs being sung merrily, kettle-drums being played enthusiastically, and a wave after wave of loud chorus of applause and thanksgiving that ranted the air and overflowed in every direction². (Chand line no. 2)

[Note—¹How lucky was Janak indeed! He had this once-in-a-lifetime rarest-of-rare opportunity to wash the holy and revered feet of the supreme Lord of creation which the greatest of sages, seers, ascetics and hermits would die to do but never get the chance.

Come to think of it, even Dasrath who was so profoundly blessed as to have the Lord as his son did not do this in his lifetime. Well, what is the reason; what can be the cause?

The answer is this—in terms of spiritual enlightenment, wisdom regarding the ultimate Truth that leads to self-realisation, in-depth knowledge of the principles of metaphysics and spirituality, Janak was very highly elevated and had reached the pinnacle of realization, and Dasrath was no match for him. This will be very clear if we analyse the events narrated in the story of the Ramayana.

When Janak had first met Lord Ram while welcoming sage Vishwamitra, he had expressed his astonishment at his mental and emotional condition when he saw the Lord. He was surprised how his mind that was supposed to be neutral to all worldly attractions and remain eternally dispassionate and detached had suddenly developed a strong bond of love and affection for Lord Ram at first sight. He had then unable to suppress his amazement and had openly asked Vishwamitra why was it that his Mana (mind and heart) that was immersed in the bliss of Brahm-realisation had become so attracted by the charm of Lord Ram, something that was not in his nature, and therefore it was surely something that had more in it than what met the eye. Though sage Vishwamitra did not give a direct reply but his agreeing with the king was enough of a hint that Janak was right to deduce that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince but a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Doha no. 216. This approval of the sage made Janak very satisfied.

This is one of the reasons why he did not felt angry or offended when Laxman had embarked on an angry tirade against him in open court when Janak had declared that since no competitor had been able to break the bow he considers that the earth is devoid of brave and strong warriors, inspite of the fact that Lord Ram had not even been invited to go and try his hand at the bow, and the mighty sage Vishwamitra was present at the venue. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Doha no. 253. Why? Because Janak knew that Laxman was not a human prince, but a personified form of Seshnath, the legendary serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as 'Kshir Sagar', and who holds the earth on his thousand hoods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197.

The irony of the matter is that Dasrath was so overwhelmed by the dark shadow of Maya of the Lord, i.e. the Lord's delusion creating powers, that prevented Dasrath from realizing the truth about the Lord and remaining mired in worldly ignorance, thinking the Lord to be his 'son' like an ordinary human father would. Dasrath had forgotten that Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who had descended upon earth with a clear divine mission of clearing the menace of demons from the world. Dasrath thought that Ram was his son, his heir who should ascend the throne of Ayodhya, rule over the kingdom, produce sons to carry over the family line, spread the fame of the family and so on and so forth like an ordinary father would expect. This would be crystal clear at two points of time—

(i) When sage Vishwamitra had gone to request him to send Lord Ram to the forest to eliminate the demons so that the fire sacrifices of sages could be completed unhindered, Dasrath had bluntly refused. Like an ordinary man, he would not allow his sons to go to the forest to face the cruel demons and suffer harm. He did not realize that Lord Ram's chief mission in this world was to eliminate the demons, and this was the first step. It was then that sage Vasistha had to intervene and make him change his mind. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

(ii) The second time when we find Dasrath showing his ignorance of who Lord Ram actually was is when he was on his death-bed and wailing for ‘his son’ who had gone to the forest. Dasrath wailed and grieved, repeatedly calling out the name of Ram, his ‘son’, and declaring that he cannot live without seeing him like an ordinary father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155. If the king had realized that he whom he calls his ‘son’ is not a human prince but the Lord of the world who has many more important things to do than to be at his beck-and-call at Ayodhya so that the old king can see him daily by his side, Dasrath would not have lamented the way he did, but would have rather waited patiently for the Lord to finish off his assignment for which he had descended from heaven upon the earth.

²If we understand the importance and significance of this occasion as explained above, we will also understand the reason for the exuberant celebrations, in the heaven as well as on the earth. Everyone praised Janak and Sunayana and applauded their good fortune that they were able to wash the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram. This will be evident immediately below in the following verse nos. 3-8 below.]

जे पद सरोज मनोज अरि उर सर सदैव बिराजहीं । ३ ।

jē pada sarōja manōja ari ura sara sadaiva birājahīm. 3.

[The following verse nos. 3-8 build up on the first verse that says that king Janak and queen Sunayana had begun washing the feet of Lord Ram. Were these ordinary feet they were washing? Well, to answer this question, these verses outline the glories, divinity and importance of the holy feet of the Lord, and in a way praise the immense good fortune and rare luck that Janak and Sunayana had that they had been able to hold in their hands and wash the holy feet of the supreme Lord of creation for which every living being would sacrifice everything if they had been given this rare chance, a chance which eludes even the greatest of sages, saints, hermits and ascetics.]

The holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram) which eternally bloom like a beautiful lotus flower in the lake-like heart of Lord Shiva who has conquered ‘Manoj’, the god of passions¹ (and therefore is deemed to practice exemplary self-control over his sense organs as well as his emotions and thoughts having their center in the heart and the mind respectively), ----(Chanda line no. 3)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 328.

Lord Shiva has many names, and ‘the Lord who had conquered, the Lord who had overcome the wild inciting gestures of the god of passion, known as Kamdeo (cupid; “manōja ari”)', is one of them. This entire episode of why and how this happened is narrated while describing the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

The heart of Shiva—or, for that matter, of all living beings—is envisioned as a lake in which numerous desires and yearnings live like aquatic animals living in water. These animals continuously keep churning the water, never letting it rest so that the dirt floating in it cannot have any chance to settle down at the bottom and make the surface of the water clean. The very presence of these aquatic animals makes the water of the lake

polluted and dirty. The same thing applies to the creature—as long as he is not able to control his natural desires, yearnings, tendencies, emotions and inclinations, his heart can never find peace and rest.

The greatest turbulence in the water of this lake-like heart is created by Kamdeo, the personified form of a creature's natural impulses, inclinations and passions, the desire for self-gratification and satisfying the urges and the needs of the sense organs. The only possible way is to consciously subdue Kamdeo, overcome his enticements and allurements, and rebuff him and his gestures by practicing self-control and keeping a tight leash on one's own self. One who has conquered Kamdeo is the greatest conqueror in this world because Kamdeo is the most formidable enemy for the creature's peace of mind and happiness.

The metaphor of the lotus is universally used in the ancient scriptures to describe something that is very pure and clean inspite of living in an unclean environment. This is because the dirty water of the pond or the lake does not cling to the petals of the lotus flower inspite of the latter living in this surrounding; the lotus always remains clean and pure irrespective of the pollution of the water of its habitat, the lake or the pond.

Living of Lord Ram in the form of a lotus flower in the lake-like heart of Lord Shiva who is a conqueror of Kamdeo means that both Lord Ram and Lord Shiva are free from the corruptions associated with this world. Lord Ram is eternally divine and holy as symbolized by the purity and cleanliness of the lotus flower, and Lord Shiva too is holy and clean because he has been able to conquer Kamdeo, the chief polluter of the Mana (heart and mind).

Lord Shiva is the greatest devotee of Lord Ram. This fact has been acknowledged by Lord Ram himself and the Lord has reciprocated Shiva's dedication and devotion by declaring that if anyone wants to have Bhakti (devotional access) for Lord Ram then he must first have Bhakti for Lord Shiva, because without the blessings of Shiva it is not possible to have Bhakti for Lord Ram. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

This divine story known as Ram Charit Manas which describes the worldly deeds of Lord Ram who was a personified form of the Supreme Being was in fact conceived or revealed first in the heart of Lord Shiva. He had then divulged it to his divine consort Parvati as well as to Kaag-Bhusund (the saint-crow) from whom it passed down to sage Yagyawalkya, Bharadwaj and other sages living on earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 30.

Lord Shiva constantly repeats the holy name "RAM" in his heart as the only Mantra, a spiritual formula, which can provide eternal bliss, peace and happiness, a formula that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, a formula that gives beatitude and felicity to the soul of the creature. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19.]

जे सकृत् सुमिरत बिमलता मन सकल कलि मल भाजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

jē sakṛta sumirata bimalatā mana sakala kali mala bhājahīm. 4.

The Mana (mind and heart) becomes purified and cleaned of all worldly taints and delusions associated by the current age of Kali-yug by remembering these holy feet (of Lord Ram) even once-----[Chand line no. 4)

जे परसि मुनिबनिता लही गति रही जो पातकमई । ५ ।

jē parasi munibanitā lahī gati rahī jō pātakamaī. 5.

By touching this holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram), even the sinful wife of the sage (i.e. Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam) attained liberation for her self.¹----- (Chanda line no. 5)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211. Please refer to the relevant verses and the notes accompanying them.]

मकरंदु जिन्ह को संभु सिर सुचिता अवधि सुर बरनई ॥ ६ ॥

makarandu jinha kō sambhu sira sucitā avadhi sura baranaī. 6.

The gods have praised and adored the holiness and the purity of the nectar (i.e. the water of the holy river Ganges) flowing out of these lotus-like feet (of Lord Ram) that was shown so much reverence by Lord Shiva that he decided to keep it on his head (as a mark of showing the greatest of respect to it).¹----- (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—¹The ‘nectar’ flowing out of the lotus representing Lord Ram’s holy feet refers to the river Ganges which is also called the ‘river of gods’. The gods revere it so much that when Ganges descended upon the earth from heaven, Lord Shiva decided to keep it on his head as a mark of showing respect to it and prevent it from getting dirty or polluted by coming in touch with earth which is gross and dirty.]

Sage Vishwamitra had told the story of river Ganges to Lord Ram and Laxman when they were on their way to Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 212, along with their accompanying notes.]

करि मधुप मन मुनि जोगिजन जे सेइ अभिमत गति लहैं । ७ ।

kari madhupa mana muni jōgijana jē sē'i abhimata gati lahaiṁ. 7.

Sages and hermits transform their Mana (mind and heart) into a black-bee so as to be able to drink (soak-in; remain submerged and engrossed in the thoughts of) the nectar of these holy feet (of Lord Ram), while ascetics attain anything they want or achieve their desired spiritual goals and objectives by serving them (i.e. having devotion for and meditating upon them).¹----- (Chanda line no. 7)

[Note—¹The sages concentrate their minds and focus their thoughts on the holy feet of Lord Ram to derive immense spiritual bliss, felicity and beatitude from it just like the bee that first hovers over the lotus flower and then slowly settles on it to enjoy drinking its sweet nectar. Once the bee is attracted to the lotus flower and tastes the nectar, it does not like being disturbed; it becomes oblivious to the world outside. Similar condition prevails with the sages and the hermits: once they hitch their mind on the holy feet of Lord Ram even by conscious effort, the rest becomes very easy for them. The intensity and depth of the bliss and ecstasy that they get is so magnetic and profound that they don’t have to prod their mind and heart any further to love Lord Ram and remain focused on his holy feet. It becomes natural and a latent habit with them.]

The same principle applies to the ascetics. They follow the path of Yoga and Dhyan which entails intense meditation and concentration respectively. These paths are rigorous and need a lot of effort. But if they focus their attention on the holy feet of Lord Ram as a means of doing Yoga and Dhyan, the path becomes very easy for them, because whereas pure Yoga and Dhyan are tough exercises requiring a lot of practice and being alert against their many pitfalls and dangers, having devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram serves the same purpose but without its attendant hassles.]

ते पद पखारत भाग्यभाजनु जनकु जय जय सब कहैं ॥ ८ ॥

tē pada pakhārata bhāgyabhājanu janaku jaya jaya saba kahaim. 8.

It is the same holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram) that Janak was holding today and affectionately washing them with his own hands with the greatest of reverence. How fortunate and lucky was he! Everyone¹ (the gods as well as the humans) acknowledged this in a unanimous voice, repeatedly hailing him and his good luck (as well as the accumulated effects of his meritorious deeds that had made this happen). (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹Refer Chanda line nos. 1-2 herein above in this context, and the meaning becomes clear. When Janak had started washing the feet of Lord Ram, there was a symphony of songs, music and loud applause in ‘the city and the sky or heaven’. It means both the ‘humans’ and the ‘gods’ had joined in praising him in the ‘city’ and the ‘heaven’ respectively.]

बर कुअँरि करतल जोरि साखोचारु दोउ कुलगुर करैं । ९ ।

भयो पानिगहनु बिलोकि बिधि सुर मनुज मुनि आनँद भरैं ॥ १० ॥

bara ku'amri karatala jōri sākhōcāru dō'u kulagura karaim. 9.

bhayō pānigahanu bilōki bidhi sura manuja muni ānamda bharaim. 10.

As part of the wedding ritual, the two family Gurus (i.e. sages Vasistha and Sadanand acting on behalf of kings Dasrath and Janak respectively) made the groom and the bride join the palms of their hands with each other while they (the Gurus) read the family genealogy of the two sides¹. (Chanda line no. 9)

When the groom and the bride had touched each other's palms (as a token or gesture of ‘union, closeness, obliteration of distance between the two, and equal partnership in thick and thin of future life’)², everyone who saw this glorious event—the creator Vidhi, the gods, and the humans who were present on the auspicious occasion—was filled with great happiness and euphoria. (Chanda line no. 10)

[Note—¹This process is called “Saakho-chaar”—a ritual that involves reciting the names of prominent members of the two families of the groom and the bride while they hold hands or touch each other's palms in a symbolic gesture of union or closeness. This gesture symbolically establishes a union between the two families by virtue of this marriage. This unification is done with all the guests as witnesses, and they are deemed to have ratified this union.

²The ritual when the groom accepts the hands of the bride is called “Paani-grahan”—‘accepting’ her ‘hands’. It is a symbolic gesture that implies that the boy has accepted the girl as his life-time partner and both of them will share the joys and sorrows of life equally.

In the context of Lord Ram and Sita, it was a union of Brahm with his Shakti represented by Lord Ram and Sita respectively. The touching of their hands also meant that now-onwards they will jointly strive to fulfill the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the gods and mother earth that he will free them from the horrors of the demons. Therefore, it was now their joint responsibility, and not only that of Lord Ram.

This is why the Creator and the gods rejoiced, and the sages and other humans joined them in rejoicing as they represented the earth.]

सुखमूल दूलहु देखि दंपति पुलक तन हुलस्यो हियो । ११ ।

sukhamūla dūlahu dēkhi dampati pulaka tana hulasyō hiyō. 11.

When the royal couple (i.e. king Janak and queen Sunayana) saw the groom who was like a root from which all happiness and bliss originated (and then sprouted into a huge tree to benefit the whole world), they were very thrilled in their bodies and their hearts were overwhelmed (with love, affection, bliss and euphoria)¹. (Chanda line no. 11)

[Note—¹Another way of reading this verse is: “When the royal couple watched the groom who was a fountain of happiness and bliss, their bodies were thrilled and their hearts heaved with the emotions of love, affection and ecstasy.”

King Janak had conceded that Lord Ram was so charming to look at that it seems he empowers the virtue of ‘Anand’ (bliss and happiness) itself to enable it to give bliss and happiness to others. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 217. In other words, Lord Ram is a ‘root’ from which the tree of bliss and happiness grows.]

करि लोक बेद बिधानु कन्यादानु नृपभूषन कियो ॥ १२ ॥

kari lōka bēda bidhānu kan'yādānu nṛpabhūṣana kiyō. 12.

Then the king (Janak) who was like a gem in the community of kings (i.e. who had excellent qualities and was most virtuous amongst all the kings), observed all the social customs and norms dictated by the Vedas to formally hand over the bride to the groom in a ritual called ‘Kanyaa-Daan’¹. (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹“Kanyaa-Daan”—During the process of the wedding rites known as “Kanyaa-Daan”, which literally means ‘donating or giving away the girl’, both the parents of the bride must sit together at the time of the crucial phase. It’s called a “Daan” because once when someone ‘donates’ something, or gives a “Daan”, he relinquishes all his rights over the item donated or given away to other in charity. The bride’s parents have no right over their daughter after marriage. She even has to forgo her ancestral family name and instead assume the title of her husband, creating an absolutely new identity for herself. This is the greatest sacrifice one can make—to part with the daughter forever is like cutting-off one fraction of their own being as far as the parents of the bride is concerned. The girl has the genes of her parents running in her bloodstream, and so she symbolically is a ‘part of her parent’s existence in this world’. But suddenly she—as well as her

parents—has to snap this tie. Imagine how painful would it be for you if any part of your being is suddenly cut-off? The great king Dadhichi had ‘donated’ his bones to the gods for making their weapons, especially the Vajra of Indra, with which they defeated the demons. Giving away of the beloved daughter whom the parents have reared from day one of her birth with all care and love a parent can only give, is not a mean sacrifice to do, and this is why this step of the wedding is known as “Kanyaa Daan”.

The presence of both the partners, the mother and the father of the girl, is obligatory to ensure that both their consent is given for this ritual.

The ritual of Kanyaa-daan and Paani-grahan are undertaken simultaneously and compliment each other. While ‘Paani-grahan’ means the bride’s hand and responsibility for her well-being has been willingly accepted by the groom, ‘Kanyaa-daan’ means that her father has willingly given her to the groom forever, and he will never claim any right over her or any material wealth that she would inherit from the side of the groom’s family in future.

Refer also to another of Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal” that is exclusively dedicated to this theme of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita. Kanyaa Daan is narrated in brief in its verse no. 144.]

हिमवंत जिमि गिरिजा महेसहि हरिहि श्री सागर दई । १३ ।

तिमि जनक रामहि सिय समरपी बिस्व कल कीरति नई ॥ १४ ॥

himavanta jimi girijā mahēsahi harihi śrī sāgara daī. 13.

timi janaka rāmahī siya samarapī bisva kala kīrati naī. 14.

In the manner Himwant (the king of the Mountains) had given his daughter Girija (Parvati) in marriage to Lord Mahesh (Shiva)¹, and Sagar (the celestial ocean) had given Sri (Laxmi) to Hari (Lord Vishnu)² [13], Janak submitted (or gave) his daughter Sita to Lord Ram in marriage³, an event which bestowed upon him unprecedented glory and fame that spread world-wide⁴ [14]. (Chanda line nos. 13-14)

[Note—¹This is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 101. During the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati, who was also known as “Girija” because she was the daughter of Giri, the king of Mountains, the same process as narrated while Lord Ram was married to Sita was followed then. Since there is a similarity between the two marriages, Lord Shiva’s marriage is recalled here.

²This incident refers to the time when the celestial ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life. Amongst other items that were produced by this churning was Laxmi. She was the daughter of Sagar, the ocean, because she emerged from it. Later on, Laxmi was married to Lord Vishnu. This incident is referred to in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 54—54½.

³Refer Janki Mangal, line nos. 1-2 of Chanda no. 18 where exactly the same idea is conveyed.

⁴Just as Himwan got world-wide fame that has lasted from time immemorial by being the father-in-law of Lord Shiva, and Sagar due to being Lord Vishnu’s father-in-law, king Janak acquired world-wide eternal fame of an unprecedented nature by becoming the father-in-law of Lord Ram.

Lord Ram’s glory and fame was well-established by now. He had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva in an assembly that was attended by thousands of kings and princes where none of them was able to as much as move the bow even an inch

inspite of their best of efforts, what to imagine of breaking it. Immediately after that, sage Parashuram had come angrily to wreak revenge for this breaking of the bow, but not only could he not harm Lord Ram but in the end had to submit before the Lord, surrender his own bow to him, and ask for forgiveness. All these incidents have already been narrated earlier in this Kand. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; and from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285 respectively.)

The fame and glory of Lord Ram was no less than that of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. While on the one hand Lord Ram resides in the heart of Lord Shiva as the latter's revered deity, on the other hand he is a manifested form of Lord Vishnu himself. Therefore, marrying his daughter to such a famous and glorious prince as Lord Ram naturally helped to spread king Janak's own fame along with that of the Lord's because of the ties created by this marriage.

The parents of Sita (i.e. king Janak and queen Sunayana) knew very well about the glories and divine mission of Lord Ram on this earth as proclaimed by the famous sage Yagyawalkya who was a frequent visitor to the court of king Janak and also happened to be the latter's Guru, and was repeated by the queen herself by citing the sage. These two facts are clearly available in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 285; and (ii) Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 1-2.

Further, Janak has declared the fact that he knows everything about who Lord Ram was and why did he marry Sita in Adhyatma Ramayan at the time of departure of the marriage party from Janakpur for Ayodhya after the marriage ceremonies were over. Refer: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 63-66.]

क्यों करै बिनय बिदेहु कियो बिदेहु मूरति सावँरीं । १५ ।

करि होमु बिधिवत गाँठि जोरी होन लागीं भावँरीं ॥ १६ ॥

kyōm karai binaya bidēhu kiyō bidēhu mūrati sāvamrīṁ. 15.

kari hōmu bidhivata gāṁṭhi jōrī hōna lāgīṁ bhāvamrīṁ. 16.

Janak was so enchanted and overwhelmed by the beguiling beauty of the dark-complexioned form of the Lord (Sri Ram) that he was dazed so much that he lost awareness of his surroundings and forgot that it was the time to offer formal prayers or respects to the groom.

[The king continued gazing at the bewitching beauty of the face of Lord Ram and was so enamoured by it that he virtually forgot that time was passing away and he was expected to perform the next step in the wedding rituals, which was to offer prayers or respects to the groom. However, he recovered himself after some time and continued with the ceremonies as follows—] (15)

Oblations and libations were duly offered to the sacred fire (a process known as "Homa") in the proper traditional way as sanctioned in the Vedas and other scriptures.

When these were completed, the ends of the marriage robes of the bride and the groom were tied together, and the couple went around the sacred fire several times (i.e. did circumambulation of the sacred fire in a rite known as "Bhaanwari"). (16)

[Note—Bhaanwari is also narrated by Tulsidas in his other books describing the story of the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita—viz. (i) "Geetawali" of Tulsidas describes this rite of 'Bhaanwari' in its Baal Kand, verse no. 105, stanza no. 3; and (ii) "Janki

Mangal”, a book exclusively dedicated to this theme of Lord Ram’s marriage, in its Chanda no. 18, line no. 3.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 325 that appear herein below.

Circumambulation of the sacred fire is done so as to make it a witness to this union of the boy and the girl as well as the marriage vows both of them take. ‘Fire’ is the most potent and the purest of all the deities, and it is able to burn all that is dirty and impure while leaving untouched the pure and the truthful. In this material world it is evident when a goldsmith puts a sample of gold in the fire—the fire burns all the impurities that may be present in the sample, but it does not touch the raw metal or affect its purity.

The process of Bhaanwari is a warning to the couple that both of them are obliged to adhere to the vows they have taken in the presence and witness of the sacred fire, and be warned that this powerful fire element is very dangerous and unforgiving as it does not tolerate nuisance of any kind. Let them be warned that they would be scorched to death should they take this warning lightly in their lives and play fools with this sacred witness of the Fire God!

From the perspective of metaphysics, this process when applied to Lord Ram and Sita assumes a profound meaning. Lord Ram was a personified form of ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being who is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the all-encompassing, all-pervading and immanent macrocosmic invisible form of the Super Consciousness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.

Now, according to the Upanishads, Brahm does not do anything himself, but he employs his ‘Maya Shakti’, which is Brahm’s dynamic, almighty, cosmic power that is also responsible for creation of delusions, to do whatever he wishes. It is this Maya Shakti of Brahm that keeps the wheel of creation rotating endlessly. It is also said that Maya is a maidservant of Brahm and follows the instructions of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 71. The servant cannot be superior to the Master, and a loyal and faithful servant is one who always ‘follows’ his Lord.

Another important point to remember is that Brahm and Maya are inseparable because if Brahm wishes to ‘do anything’ he will have to take recourse of seeking help from Maya who obediently obeys him—an euphuism for ‘following Brahm’.

Then again, the ‘tying of the ends of the wedding robe of Lord Ram and Sita’ prior to the Bhaanwari procession as mentioned in Chanda line no. 16 here also symbolizes this relationship between Brahm and Maya—‘they are tied and invariably associated with each other; Brahm cannot do his worldly duties without an explicit support of Maya, and neither would Maya have any existence and value without being associated with Brahm’.

As we progress with the story of Ramyana we discover the importance of this association and the role it plays in the fulfillment of the divine mission of Lord Ram. It was Sita’s abduction by Ravana that led to the final elimination of the cruel demons by Lord Ram. Without Sita the story would have been completely different.

Besides the elimination of the demons, Sita played a stellar role in establishing the glory and fame of Lord Ram. It was during the bow-breaking ceremony related to her marriage that the world came to know who Ram was. It was in her marriage ceremony that the Lord had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva which not even the mightiest and strongest of other kings or princes who had come from all corners of the world could do, thereby establishing the Lord’s glory and dynamic abilities in this world in an irrefutable way. The world then began to recognize that Lord Ram was the most able and strongest warrior with no one to match him in this world. His glory was further enhanced when he had as easily and comfortably vanquished the haughtiness of sage Parashuram who was renowned as the killer of the warrior race.

So we see that Sita had been instrumental in establishing Lord Ram's fame and glory in this gross world even as Maya had helped Brahm at the cosmic level to unfold his potentials and miraculous abilities by creating magic-like delusions and the world of infinite variations.

This Maya is very powerful, and once it was let loose by Brahm it became a virtual Frankenstein Monster because it got hold of Brahm himself. This development is metaphorically depicted in the process of 'Bhaanwari'. So we discover that a reversal of roles takes place once this Brahm decides to assume a gross form like any other living being of this world by employing his own Maya to hide the truth of his form. That is, only a few enlightened and self-realised persons knew who Ram actually was, for the majority of the population he was the son of Dasrath, the prince of Ayodhya and the groom and the husband of Sita.

The fine distinction between Brahm in his subtle and sublime cosmic form, and in his gross worldly form as Lord Ram becomes evident once we closely examine this single process of 'Bhaanwari'. Whereas Maya is the one who follows Brahm in the Lord's cosmic form, the process is reversed when the same Brahm assumes a gross body and steps into this gross world of delusions to become a human being in the form of Sri Ram, the prince of Ayodhya, who got married to the princess of Janakpur, known as Sita. As a human he is the one who follows Maya—symbolised by the bride that leads this circumambulation process with the groom following her from behind during the first four rounds around the sacred fire while doing Bhaanwari.

But after the first four rounds, the groom takes the lead with the bride following him from behind during the last three rounds. There are a total of seven rounds around the sacred fire.

That is, first it was Sita who was followed by Lord Ram during the first four rounds, and then the places were reversed and Lord Ram led the circumambulation. This implies that after Brahm realized that his Maya has started to get the better of him, he ordered Maya to go behind him. That is, Brahm stepped in and brought Maya under his control before the things got out of control.

From practical point of view this process of Bhaanwari tells us that even if we are deluded in the early phases of our existence in this world because we are overcome by the influence of Maya as soon as we get involved in the affairs of this gross world symbolized by marriage which robs the man and the woman of their independence, the sooner we wake up to the truth and reality and overcome the effects of Maya the better it is for us. Though Maya has forced us to follow it in the beginning of our worldly existence, we can always put it behind us and force it to follow us should we decide to become wise and enlightened by shunning delusions and worldly attachments.]

दो०. जय धुनि बंदी बेद धुनि मंगल गान निसान ।

सुनि हरषहिं बरषहिं बिबुध सुरतरु सुमन सुजान ॥ ३२४ ॥

dōhā.

jaya dhuni bandī bēda dhuni maṅgala gāna nisāna.

sunī haraṣahim̐ baraṣahim̐ bibudha surataru sumana sujāna. 324.

At that time there was a loud cacophony of sounds consisting of praises and hailings from royal minstrels and bards, the chanting of the verses from the Vedas (by the Brahmins), the singing of auspicious songs befitting the occasion (by professional singers as well as

women-folk of the kingdom), and the playing of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums.

When the immortal gods (who were watching the proceedings from the heaven) heard this symphony of sounds from their position in the sky (heaven)¹, they felt exhilarated, and showered the best of flowers² plucked from the evergreen tree that grows in heaven (which is known as the “Sur-Taru²”; the tree of paradise; Sur = god; Taru = tree). (Doha no. 324)

[Note—¹We have read that the gods had assembled in the sky in their aerial vehicles to watch the divine spectacle of the union of Lord Ram with Sita in a formal ritual that is known as ‘marriage’ in this world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 314.

²At that time also they had showered flowers—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 142.]

चौ०. कुअँरु कुअँरि कल भावँरि देहीं । नयन लाभु सब सादर लेहीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ku'amṛu ku'amṛi kala bhāvamṛi dēhīm. nayana lābhu saba sādara lēhīm. 1.

As the distinguished groom (“Kunwar; ku'amṛu”) and the bride (“Kunwari; ku'amṛi”) performed the ritual of ‘Bhaanwari’ (“bhāvamṛi”) with graceful steps (as described above in note of Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein above), all those present on the occasion enjoyed the wonderful sight with great affection, and felt honoured to be able to witness it. (1)

[Note—It was a divine spectacle of extraordinary beauty when the supreme Lord of creation in the form of Sri Ram was followed by his Shakti in the form of Sita as they went around the sacred fire in a rite of marriage known as “Bhaanwari”.

It was not always that one could witness such a rare and wonderful spectacle. Therefore, all those who watched it regarded themselves as very fortunate. And to see anything one has to have ‘eyes’, so this is the reason why the ‘eye’ has been singled out in this verse for thanksgiving. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 317 which describe how the different gods had felt lucky themselves and had envied each other’s ability to watch the beauty of Lord Ram more clearly and with extra eyes as the Lord was going to the marriage pavilion astride his horse.]

जाइ न बरनि मनोहर जोरी । जो उपमा कछु कहैं सो थोरी ॥ २ ॥

jā'i na barani manōhara jōrī. jō upamā kachu kahauri sō thōrī. 2.

[Tulsidas says—] ‘The divine couple (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita) was so beguilingly beautiful to behold and enchanting to look at that it mesmerized the onlooker and held

him in thrall. Whatever comparisons I may try to make will fall short of expectations and cannot do justice to the reality.’ (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/105—1/106 also.

Tulsidas breaks from the narrative to add a comment from his own side. A poet or author would use a metaphor or simile to try to give an idea about the thing, person or event he or she is describing by comparing it with some other entity or thing or event that is well known and universal so that the reader can get a rough picture about what is being said of the subject under discussion. For instance, we say ‘white as milk’, ‘brave as a lion’, ‘bright as daylight’, ‘chirpy as a bird’, ‘tall as a mountain’, or ‘beautiful as a garden of fresh, blooming flowers’, ‘beautiful as the sky seen during the sunset or sunrise’, ‘beautiful as a rose flower’, ‘cold as ice’, ‘fresh as the morning dew’, and so on.

What Tulsidas means here is that the sight of Lord Ram and Sita standing together in all their fine wedding robes, displaying finesse and grace of the highest degree, was astoundingly fabulous and marvelous to look so much so that it enamoured the mind and the heart of all those who watched them, keeping everyone dazed and amazed. The view was so beautiful that it defied description, and it is impossible therefore to compare it with anything known to this world because there is nothing in this gross mortal world that can be used to compare the sublime and subtle beauty of the couple. In terms of beauty, grandeur, glamour, charm and magnificence, Lord Ram and Sita were matchless, unique and one of their own kind. The best of metaphors and similes would fall short of the expected mark and would give a wrong impression of the intensity and depth of the heavenly beauty of Lord Ram and Sita as it appeared at that time.

However, Tulsidas attempts to try to give an idea of the beauty of the couple in the following verse nos. 3-4 herein below, but immediately follows it by pointing out its flaws or shortcomings in next verse no. 5.]

राम सीय सुंदर प्रतिछाहीं । जगमगात मनि खंभन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
मनहुँ मदन रति धरि बहु रूपा । देखत राम बिआहु अनूपा ॥ ४ ॥
दरस लालसा सकुच न थोरी । प्रगटत दुरत बहोरि बहोरी ॥ ५ ॥

rāma sīya sundara pratichāhīm. jagamagāta mani khambhana māhīm. 3.
manahum madana rati dhari bahu rūpā. dēkhata rāma bi'āhu anūpā. 4.
darasa lālasā sakuca na thōrī. pragaṭata durata bahōri bahōrī. 5.

Exceptionally beautiful images of Lord Ram and Sita were reflected from the glittering bejeweled pillars of the pavilion.

[The moment that is being described is that of ‘Bhaanwari’ when Lord Ram and Sita were moving around the sacred fire. The pillars were well-polished and shining. Thus, the image of the couple was reflected from different angles on the many pillars of the pavilion. In other words, the images were many, as many as the pillars, and they kept on changing as the couple moved.] (3)

These images reminded one of Kamdeo (cupid) and his wife Rati who appeared to have personally come down to witness the divine marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita, a glamorous occasion that was rare and most magnificent to watch¹. (4)

They, Kamdeo and Rati, have a strong desire to come up front and watch the divine spectacle from up close, but they are very hesitant and bashful to do so. Hence,

they keep on appearing and disappearing from view repeatedly², as if playing a game of hide-and-seek. (5)

[Note—¹We have read in verse no. 2 above that Tulsidas says that the view of Lord Ram and Sita is so magnificent that he fails to find an apt comparison. Then he gave a second thought: perhaps his readers would like him to at least hint at the beauty of the sight, even if this hint would not give any idea of the reality of the situation. So, Tulsidas thought, 'What's the harm; let me tell them. Then I'll show its drawback.'

Many gods and goddesses were present on the occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, but Tulsidas chose Kamdeo and Rati because as far as gods and goddesses are concerned, this couple is the most beautiful of the entire pantheon. Kamdeo (cupid) is the patron god of passion, love and beauty. The word 'Kaam' is used as a synonym for these emotions, and the word 'Deo' of course means 'god'. Hence, the best choice to compare Lord Ram with was 'Kamdeo', and 'Rati', Kamdeo's consort, was the best choice for comparison with Sita.

All other gods and goddesses had assumed human forms to mingle with others as clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318 respectively. But Kamdeo and Rati decided not to do so. What may have been the reason for this? This couple was proud of its fabulous beauty and matchless glamour, and thought that if they became humans like their other counterpart gods and goddesses, they will not be noticed in the huge crowd that milled around the pavilion. So they decided to come in their original form as invisible 'god and goddess', instead of as a human.

They found that in their original invisible form no one would recognize them, and they would be marked as being absent in the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita in the annals of history. So what should they do now? Well, they thought that they will reveal themselves in the form of images that appear on the glittering pillars made of gems and priceless stones. It is now that the clever poet Tulsidas picks up the cue and says that 'the images of Kamdeo and Rati that appeared on the pillars were actually those of Lord Ram and Sita respectively'.

Tulsidas has in one stroke served two purposes—one, he has acknowledged the attendance of Kamdeo and Rati on this auspicious occasion, and two, he has debunked Kamdeo and Rati for their false pride of being the most glamorous couple in creation by saying that what was seen on the pillars and thought to be Kamdeo and Rati were actually images of Lord Ram and Sita! If the 'reflected image' is so stupendously beautiful, one can imagine how beautiful the 'principal object' must be.

Thus, the adroit poet Tulsidas is able to satisfy his eager readers who want to have some kind of comparison nevertheless by citing this instance of images being reflected on the pillar to give the readers an idea of the glamour and beauty of the form of Lord Ram and Sita as they appeared during their marriage ceremony, while at the same time upholding his observation that they were so fabulously magnificent to look at that no comparison can be made as asserted by him in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above.

²The next question is 'what was the flaw in this image of Kamdeo and Rati that was seen in the pillars that it could not be an ideal comparison with Lord Ram and Sita'?

Well, for one it was an 'image that was a mere reflection'. A reflected image cannot replace the original; after all it is merely a copy of the original. The second reason is that 'this image seen on the pillars seemed to change every now and then, appearing now and vanishing the next moment, or looking attractive now and distorted the next moment, as Lord Ram and Sita moved from one point to another'. This constant change in the images on the pillars was due to many reasons—such as the angle from which they were viewed, the position and angle of Lord Ram and Sita vis-a-vis the individual pillar, the surface

polish, deformities and curvature of the pillars themselves, and the light and other extraneous factors that intervened to give a final effect to the images.

Now, whereas there was no consistency in shape and uniformity in the beauty of the images reflected from the pillars, the sight of the original form of Lord Ram and Sita inside the pavilion was consistently brilliant and uniformly beautiful to behold.

Therefore, there can be no comparison between the image of Lord Ram and Sita seen in the pillars to symbolize the presence of Kamdeo and Rati, and their original form as seen directly in the pavilion.

Another question is: 'Why were Kamdeo and Rati shy of appearing in person like other gods and goddesses?' The answer is simple: It is because Lord Shiva was present there. Lord Shiva is a renowned enemy of Kamdeo (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324), and had even burnt the latter's physical form when he once got angry at him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 87). At that time, when Rati had begged Shiva to show mercy, the Lord had blessed her by saying that henceforth her husband, Kamdeo, would live in an invisible form, without a visible body—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 87.

Therefore, Kamdeo and Rati were terrified at the prospect of assuming a visible form as humans on the one hand, and played 'hide-and-seek' by repeatedly appearing and disappearing on the pillars on the other hand, to avoid being noticed by Lord Shiva and inviting his wrath.]

भाए मगन सब देखनिहारे । जनक समान अपान बिसारे ॥ ६ ॥

bha'ē magana saba dēkhanihārē. janaka samāna apāna bisārē. 6.

These two sights (of Lord Ram and Sita in person, and their images that simmered on the pillars to remind one of Kamdeo and Rati) were so fascinating that everyone was amazed and dazed. All those who watched them were as enchanted and enraptured as king Janak had been (as described in Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein above).

(6)

[Note—The word 'everyone' includes the gods and the goddesses who were present to witness the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, both in their forms of human beings which they had assumed to participate in this auspicious occasion, as well as in their primary invisible form in the sky. Remember: Both these forms were there—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318 which deals with the goddesses assuming human forms; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 which deals with the gods assuming human forms; and (iii) numerous instances which show that the gods have showered flowers from the sky—viz. Doha no. 324, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319.]

प्रमुदित मुनिन्ह भाँवरीं फेरीं । नेगसहित सब रीति निबेरीं ॥ ७ ॥

pramudita muninha bhāmvarīṁ phērīṁ. nēgasahita saba rīti nibērīṁ. 7.

The sages (Vasistha and Satanand as the presiding priests) helped the couple to go around (circumambulate) the sacred fire to complete the ritual of 'Bhaanwari', and then they

completed all the other rites according to established tradition and customs of the society and their respective families. (7)

[Note—The process of ‘Bhaanwari’ that had commenced in Chanda no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 324 is completed here. While the newly married couple moves around the sacred fire, the presiding priests recite auspicious hymns from the scriptures and undertake all other rites and rituals associated with it.

A very interesting thing is to be noted here. The process of ‘Bhaanwari’ involves going seven times around the sacred fire. We will note here that exactly ‘seven lines’ have been written here about Bhaanwari (from Chaupai line no. 1 to 7) by the clever poet Tulsidas to indicate these ‘seven rounds’.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/105, stanza no. 4 also.]

राम सीय सिर सेंदुर देहीं । सोभा कहि न जाति बिधि केहीं ॥ ८ ॥

अरुन पराग जलजु भरि नीकें । ससिहि भूष अहि लोभ अमी कें ॥ ९ ॥

rāma sīya sira sēndura dēhīm. sōbhā kahi na jāti bidhi kēhīm. 8.
aruna parāga jalaju bhari nīkēm. sasihi bhūṣa ahi lōbha amī kēm. 9.

Lord Ram applied ‘Sindoor’¹ (vermillion powder) on the forehead of Sita along the hairline and on the hair on the top of the head. This sight was so wonderful, so beautiful and graceful to look at that even the creator Vidhi (i.e. Brahma) did not understand how to describe it*.

[*This verse can be interpreted to mean that ‘The sight of Lord Ram applying Sindoor on the head of Sita was so wonderful, so beautiful and graceful to watch that it is not possible to describe it by any means; it defied all description’.]² (8)

This scene is reminiscent of a serpent, which is thirsty for nectar, picking up a young lotus flower of reddish hue and full of pollen, to appease the moon by offering this flower to it (so that the moon feels obliged to let the thirsty serpent quench its thirst by allowing it to drink or suck at the nectar that is stored in the moon which is regarded as the heavenly pitcher in which the gods have stored their Amrit, the elixir of blissful life)². (9)

[Note—¹Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 18, line no. 3.

²In this remarkable metaphor, the arms of Lord Ram is likened to the serpent, the red-coloured cup made from gems that contained the red vermillion powder to the red lotus full of pollen, and the face of Sita to the moon. This comparison of the face of Sita to the moon has been done earlier also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230 when Lord Ram first meets Sita in the royal garden.

Another instance where Lord Ram and Sita stand face-to-face and the moon has been invoked as a comparison is when Sita puts the victory garland around the neck of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264. The similarity between these two instances is remarkable indeed and it is like a symphony in verses.]

बहुरि बसिष्ठ दीन्हि अनुसासन । बरु दुलहिनि बैठे एक आसन ॥ १० ॥

bahuri basiṣṭha dīnhi anusāsana. baru dulaḥini baiṭhē ēka āsana. 10.

After this rite was completed, sage Vasistha instructed the groom and the bride to sit together on the same seat. (10)

[Note—The boy and the girl become a husband and wife once this rite of applying of the vermillion powder is finished. Prior to this they sit on separate seats, but now they are made to sit together. It implies that now onwards, they would share the ups and downs of life together on equal terms.]

छं०. बैठे बरासन रामु जानकि मुदित मन दसरथु भए। १।

तनु पुलक पुनि पुनि देखि अपनें सुकृत सुरतरु फल नए॥ २॥

chanda.

baiṭhē barāsana rāmu jānaki mudita mana dasarathu bha'ē. 1.

tanu pulaka puni puni dēkhi apanēm sukr̥ta surataru phala na'ē. 2.

When king Dasrath saw Lord Ram and Sita sitting together on the same seat (as husband and wife), his Mana (heart and mind) was euphoric with joy¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

His (Dasrath's) body was thrilled with joy and happiness as he watched his good deeds take shape and fructify in the form of fruits of the evergreen tree of gods represented by Lord Ram (his meritorious and gracious son) and Sita (his beautiful and virtuous daughter-in-law)*².

[*This line can read as follows also—“When Dasrath watched the couple sitting together on the same seat (as husband and wife), his body was thrilled with the joy that came with the thought that all his good deeds, which he compared to the evergreen tree of gods, have produced new fruits (in the sense that his son has been married to a beautiful, meritorious and virtuous princesses from another great kingdom of immense repute). What more would a father want.”] (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹Janak was fascinated by Lord Ram because he had recognized who Ram was, something that eluded Dasrath. Janak had also been thrilled, but not because he was watching or honouring a handsome prince who he has been fortunate enough to have as a groom for his daughter, but as a personified form of Brahm.

Janak's level of spiritual enlightenment had immediately warned him at first sight of the Lord that he was not an ordinary prince but some divine Being. This is clear in the reading of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

But Dasrath was so overcome with delusions created by the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) that he had merely treated Ram as his 'son', and had died wailing for him and calling out his name with a mental image of a son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ahodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.

Even at the time when sage Vishwamitra had asked him to send Lord Ram with him to help eliminate the terror of demons, Dasrath had not realized that it was a part of the divine mission for which Lord Ram had come down to earth from heaven, but refused to oblige the sage fearing for the safety of his son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208.

So, in all the earlier verses which deal with Janak (Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 324) it has been said that he was enthralled by the beautiful form of Lord Ram, and not of 'the couple'. When a reference to the 'couple' (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita) is made in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above, Janak is cited merely as an example of the joy that others felt (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above).

The picture of Lord Ram and Sita together is absolutely stunning as endorsed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²On the other hand, when the turn of describing Dasrath came, Tulsidas chose the moment when Lord Ram and Sita sat together as husband and wife. And then he says that "Dasrath was happy that all his meritorious deeds have taken the form of the couple, Lord Ram his son, and Sita his daughter-in-law". Even a causal reading of the concerned verses will make this observation clear.

It is said here that he was happy because 'new fruits have been produced by the tree of his good deeds'. What is 'new' about it? Earlier his son was unmarried, and now he is married, and the icing on the cake is that the bride he has got is the most beautiful girl in the whole world (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251). Added to this good fortune is the fact that he acquired great fame and got himself recognized in the whole world by breaking the bow of Lord Shiva and overcoming the wrath of the vengeful sage Parashuram, two achievements that made Lord Ram stand apart from all the so-called brave and mighty princes and kings of the time. What more would a father want in this world—Dasrath is so happy that his son has acquired for himself matchless glory and acclaim that not only established him as a strong and powerful prince but also brought laurels to his family, the dynasty of king Raghu. Another fruit is that his son has married a beautiful princess of great grace, virtues and beauty, and who belongs to another great kingdom of Janakpur that is as renowned as his own kingdom of Ayodhya.

This is the 'new fruit' that has given so much happiness to Dasrath. With the arrival of a bride, Sita, in the household, a new member has come—and it is the same as having another wonderful fruit in addition to the fruits he already has in the form of his beloved son Lord Ram and his other three sons Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman. So if previously he had 'four divine fruits', now he has 'five' such fruits with the addition of Sita in the family.

King Dasrath had no daughter, and he longed to have one. By the grace of God and the good effects of his meritorious religious deeds and righteous life he has got his wish fulfilled in the form of Sita. The 'daughter-in-law', by the virtue of her marrying and adopting her husband's family as her new home, becomes a 'daughter' of her adopted family in the eyes of the 'law'. So, this was akin to Dasrath getting new fruits from the tree of his good deeds.]

भरि भुवन रहा उछाहु राम बिबाहु भा सबहीं कहा । ३ ।

केहि भाँति बरनि सिरात रसना एक यहु मंगलु महा ॥ ४ ॥

bhari bhuvana rahā uchāhu rāma bibāhu bhā sabahīm kahā. 3.

kēhi bhām̐ti barani sirāta rasanā ēka yahu maṅgalu mahā. 4.

There was universal rejoicing in all the corners of the world ("Bhuvan"). Everyone said that Lord Ram has been married (and it is therefore time to celebrate)¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

How can the lone tongue praise (or describe) this auspicious happening which is of a huge dimension and so grand that it defies description². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The same idea is expressed when Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262.

Another instance is when Sita put the victory garland on Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²Once again, the same idea of a single tongue being unable to describe the glory of a certain event or situation is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos. 289 and 318 earlier in the context of this episode of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita.]

तब जनक पाइ बसिष्ठ आयसु ब्याह साज सँवारि कै । ५ ।

मांडवी श्रुतकीरति उरमिला कुअँरि लई हँकारि कै ॥ ६ ॥

taba janaka pā'i basiṣṭha āyasu byāha sāja samvāri kai. 5.
māṇḍavī śrutakīrati uramilā ku'am̐ri la'īm hamkāri kai. 6.

[Chanda line nos. 5-12 narrate that Janak took permission from sage Vasistha and married all the other three remaining princesses of the family who were sisters and cousins of Sita to the three brothers of Lord Ram. It means that all the four brothers were married together in the same ceremony and in the same family.]

After the wedding ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita was over, Janak took permission from sage Vasistha¹ and ordered that the other three princesses (daughters) of the family, i.e. Maandavi, Srutkirti and Urmila², should be properly decked up in full bridal attire and be brought to the marriage pavilion³. (5-6)

[Note—¹Janak did not wish to miss this golden and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see all the princesses of the family married. Fortunately for him, by a stroke of good luck and the good effects of his own righteous deeds and meritorious life, and of course by the grace of God, he has not only come in contact with the most famous family of the time, the royal family of Ayodhya that had acquired so much acclaim and had established itself as a righteous and law-abiding dynasty that even the Purans and Itihasas (ancient histories of India) mentioned it, but has already established an unbreakable bond created by marrying of his daughter Sita with the eldest son of the family, i.e. Lord Ram.

Now, Janak was shy of asking Dasrath that it is his desire to marry all the other three sisters of Sita to the other three sons of Dasrath if he would permit. He did not want to create any unsavoury situation should Dasrath dither and express his reservations. After all, even if Janak had asked Dasrath directly, the latter would have sought the opinion and permission of his royal Guru, sage Vasistha, before giving an answer. So why not seek permission from Vasistha directly instead, thought Janak—because if Vasistha agreed then there was no fear of Dasrath refusing.

So, he wisely and correctly thought that it would be best for him to seek permission from sage Vasistha.

Now the question is 'why did Janak wish to get all the daughters married into the same family?' There were many probable reasons for this decision of Janak as discussed below.

Sita and her other sisters, i.e. her own sister Urmila, and her cousin sisters Maandavi and Srutkirti, were very close to each other. They loved each other extremely dearly, and the very notion that they would be separated forever after Sita's marriage had made the other three princesses plunge into deep depression. These three princesses had shared

each moment of their lives and so Janak thought that it would be prudent if they stayed together for the rest of their lives also.

Besides this, the royal family of Dasrath was highly reputed, disciplined and righteous, and all the four daughters were ensured a comfortable life in the future. Janak thought that there was no certainty what kind of family and husband the other three daughters would get if they were married elsewhere. Therefore, it was wise not to take the risk and marry them into the royal family of Ayodhya.

This marriage had the blessing of two great sages of the time—sage Vishwamitra and sage Vasistha, each no less exalted and powerful than the other. In a way they stood guarantors of happiness and well-being for all the four daughters of Janak who were getting married with the four sons of king Dasrath, and the resultant relationship and bond of friendship and family ties that were being now established.

Janak had got news through his spies that every one of the subjects in his kingdom of Janakpur wanted that all the four princesses should be married to the four wonderful princes of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line no. 3-4. Hence he thought that his decision would also be endorsed by his subjects. Every noble king ensures that all his actions and decisions are endorsed and liked by his subjects; this ensures that everyone is happy and there is no chance of rumour mongering and scandalous gossip in the kingdom. Even if something went wrong, the king would have support and sympathy of his subjects.

²Urmila was the younger sibling of Sita and the second daughter of Janak, while Maandavi and Srutkriti were the two daughters of Janak's younger brother named Kusketu or Kushdhwaj. Maandavi was the elder of the two.

The sequence in which the three princesses are mentioned is significant. Janak was the king, and so it is expected that his own daughter Urmila's name should be placed first. But instead of that, Maandavi and Srutkriti are mentioned first, followed by Urmila at the end. This implies two things—

(i) In terms of age, Maandavi was senior to both Srutkirti and Urmila, so she was named first. Srutkirti was Maandavi's sibling because both were the daughters of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of Janak. So, Srutkirti was named second. The third place was left for Urmila. Hence, they are named in this sequence.

(ii) Janak was a very conscientious king, and he did not want his younger brother Kushdhwaj to feel belittled or offended by giving the latter's two daughters Maandavi and Srutkriti less importance than his own daughter Urmila. So the wise king Janak decided that Maandavi and Srutkriti should be given precedence over Urmila when summon was sent for them.

³Janak had made his intentions clear that he wanted all of them to be married right then by ordering that they be decorated in bridal attire and then brought to the pavilion. This also shows that they hadn't accompanied Sita when she was brought for her wedding rites. Sita was accompanied by other girls and ladies, but not her three sisters. They had stayed in the palace. This was in accordance with the custom of the society and royal protocol of the time that required that unmarried daughters should not come out in the public during open ceremonies.

The marriage of all the four lovely princesses of Janakpur with the four noble princes of Ayodhya as described in the present verses of Ram Charit Manas have also been described by Tulsidas in his book "Janki Mangal" in its verse nos. 153-154.]

कुसकेतु कन्या प्रथम जो गुन सील सुख सोभामई । ७ ।

सब रीति प्रीति समेत करि सो ब्याहि नृप भरतहि दई ॥ ८ ॥

kusakētu kan'yā prathama jō guna sīla sukha sōbhāma'ī. 7.
saba rīti prīti samēta kari sō byāhi nr̥pa bharatahi da'ī. 8.

The first (elder) daughter of Kusketu (also known by the name of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of Janak) who has been named first or was summoned to the pavilion first (as mentioned in verse no. 6 herein above), was very virtuous, very courteous, gave happiness to others by her presence and amiable nature, and was a personified form of beauty and elegance. (7)

The king¹ performed all the necessary rites and duly observed all the customs before affectionately marrying her to Bharat² (the younger brother of Lord Ram). (8)

[Note—¹The 'first or elder' daughter, or 'the one who was named first amongst the three daughters called for the purpose of marriage', was Maandavi.

Though it is not clear here who had done the rites, whether it was Janak, Maandavi's elder uncle, or Maandavi's father Kushhwaj, but in all probability it was Kushdhwaj who did it because he was the father. According to the established procedure, it is always the father who does the 'Kanyaa-daan' ritual, i.e. he is the one who formally hands over his daughter to the groom as the final step during the wedding rites. In case the bride's father is not alive or unable to undertake the duty himself then only the next-of-kin, say an uncle or someone else in order of kinship and blood-line of the bride would perform Kanyaa-daan.

This means one more thing also—both Janak and Kushdhwaj were seated side by side during the entire procedure. This conclusion is obvious because four girls were married simultaneously—two were the daughters of Janak (Sita and Urmila), and two of Kushdhwaj (Maandavi and Srutkirti). It also means that the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram and his three brothers Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, were also seated on the same platform so that the rituals could be done together.

Lord Ram and Sita were finished with their part, but they continued to sit alongside the others to create a wonderful sight of immeasurable and indescribable beauty as narrated in Chanda line no. 13-16 that follow below.

²It is prohibited in the scriptures that two or more blood-sisters (i.e. two or more sisters having the same mother) cannot be married to blood-brothers (brothers having the same mother). This restriction is very cleverly observed in the marriage of the four princesses of Janakpur with the four princes of Ayodhya.

Let's see how: Sita was married to Lord Ram, and now we read that Maandavi was married to Bharat. Sita's mother was Sunayana, the queen of Janak, and Lord Ram's mother was the senior queen of Dasrath, queen mother Kaushalya. But Maandavi's mother was the queen of Kushdhwaj, while that of Bharat was Kaikeyi, the second queen of Dasrath. Hence, this scriptural sanction was duly observed.

Another wonderful thing to observe is that Lord Ram and Bharat looked alike—both were dark-complexioned. Likewise, the two princesses, Sita and Maandavi, looked very much like twins. Like their husbands, Lord Ram and Bharat, these two princesses too had great affinity for each other.

And by the criterion of age also, these two pairs were perfect match—because Lord Ram was the eldest of the four brothers, and Bharat was the second eldest, and likewise Sita was the eldest and Maandavi next in terms of age.]

जानकी लघु भगिनी सकल सुंदरि सिरोमनि जानि कै । ९ ।

सो तनय दीन्ही व्याहि लखनहि सकल बिधि सनमानि कै ॥ १० ॥

jānakī laghu bhaginī sakala sundari sirōmani jāni kai. 9.

sō tanaya dīnhī byāhi lakhanahi sakala bidhi sanamāni kai. 10.

[The third in line to be married were Laxman and Urmila.]

Janki's (Sita's) younger sister, whom the king (Janak) knew to be like a crown-jewel in terms of beauty and elegance, was married to Laxman with great affection and honour after all rites and customs were duly completed. (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

[Note—Urmila, the blood-sister of Sita, was married to Laxman whose mother was Sumitra, the third queen of Dasrath.

Laxman was of a fair complexion like that of Urmila, and so they made a perfect pair.

One very important factor that played a major role in Janak marrying Sita's own sister with Laxman was that he had carefully observed that both these two brothers stayed together very closely and had immense love for each other. They were more like dear friends than mere brothers, sharing each other's views and emotions openly and without reservations. This will be very clear when we recall the conversation between Lord Ram and Laxman in the garden where they met Sita, and later on when they had gone to do their evening prayers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239.

The above verses will clearly show the level of openness and frankness with which the two brothers shared each other's views and the little joys of life.

Later on in the story also we learn that when Lord Ram had gone to exile, Laxman followed him and served him very affectionately throughout.

Since Sita and Urmila were blood-sisters, and Lord Ram and Laxman shared such close relationship of affection and love, the wise king Janak thought that by virtue of this marriage of Urmila with Laxman she will have a better chance to stay in close proximity with her own sister Sita who was already married to Lord Ram. The two pairs would bond well with each other because of the natural affinity between its members.]

जेहि नामु श्रुतकीरति सुलोचनि सुमुखि सब गुन आगरी । ११ ।

सो दई रिपुसूदनहि भूपति रूप सील उजागरी ॥ १२ ॥

jēhi nāmu śrutakīrati sulōcani sumukhi saba guna āgarī. 11.

sō da'ī ripusūdanahi bhūpati rūpa sīla ujāgarī. 12.

She whose name was Srutkirti who had beautiful eyes (like that of a doe), an attractive face, was a mine of good virtues, and was well-known for her beauty and amiable nature, was given in marriage by the king to Ripusudan* (another name of Shatrughan, the younger brother of Lord Ram and a sibling of Laxman). (Chanda line nos. 11-12)

[Note—The younger blood-sister of Maandavi was Srutkirti. Maandavi was married to Bharat, and her own younger sister Srutkirti was married to Shatrughan, the younger blood-brother of Laxman.

Thus, we have the following pairs: (i) Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers, was married to Sita, the eldest of the four sisters. (ii) Bharat, the second oldest of the 4

brothers, was married to Maandavi, the second oldest of the 4 sisters. (iii) Laxman, the third in line in terms of age, was married to Urmila, the third in terms of age amongst the sisters. And (iv) Shatrughan, the youngest of the 4 brothers, was married to Srutkirti who was the youngest amongst the sisters.

Besides this, all care was taken to adhere to the edict of the scriptures as outlined in a note appended to verse no. 8 herein above and explained in subsequent verses in relation to each couple.

*Shatrughan is also called “Ripusudan” which means one who trounces, one who vanquishes the enemy—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 197.]

अनुरूप बर दुलहिनि परस्पर लखि सकुच हियँ हरषहीं । १३ ।

सब मुदित सुंदरता सराहहिं सुमन सुर गन बरषहीं ॥ १४ ॥

anurūpa bara dulahini paraspara lakhi sakuca hiyaṁ haraṣahīm. 13.

saba mudita sundaratā sarāhahīm sumana sura gana baraṣahīm. 14.

When the four pairs of brides and their respective grooms looked shyly at each other and their partners, and observed that each pair was perfectly matched, they blushed exceedingly even as they felt delighted in their hearts¹. (Chanda line no. 13)

Everyone present on the occasion was euphoric, and all of them unanimously praised the magnificent beauty of the four pairs even as the assembly of gods showered flowers on them². (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—¹The four brothers and the four sisters blushed and felt shy because everyone was closely watching them, and when their eyes met their siblings they smiled in acknowledgement as well as in embarrassment because they all felt self-conscious and awkward.

²We have seen on many previous occasions that the gods have showered flowers at every instant when it was an occasion to rejoice and celebrate. The celebrated moment now was that all the four brothers had been married.]

सुंदरीं सुंदर बरन्ह सह सब एक मंडप राजहीं । १५ ।

जनु जीव उर चारिउ अवस्था बिभुन सहित बिराजहीं ॥ १६ ॥

sundarīm sundara baranha saha saba ēka maṇḍapa rājahīm. 15.

janu jīva ura cārī'u avasthā bibhuna sahita birājahīm. 16.

All the lovely brides looked very adorable in the same marriage pavilion and under the same canopy alongside their respective handsome grooms just as the Jiva (the living being, the creature) and his soul (the Jiva's Atma, the consciousness that is his true 'self'), which is also known as 'Bibhu'¹, exhibits four states of conscious existence in this world². (Chanda line no. 15-16)

[Note—¹The word “Bibhu” or “Vibhu”—This term applies to the Supreme Being. It means one who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable.

In the context of the Jiva, the living being, the Vibhu is his Atma or soul that is pure consciousness which lives in the subtle space of his heart inside his gross physical body.

The word “Jiva” means a living being. The soul of the living being is known as the Atma. According to metaphysical concept, the Atma is nothing but the pure consciousness that lives in the subtle space of the heart of the Jiva. This consciousness is the de-facto Lord or the Master of the creature, because if there is no ‘consciousness’ the creature would be dead and useless. The gross body will be there, but the Jiva is deemed to be dead if he loses consciousness in this body. This consciousness is invisible and very subtle, but the hard fact is that it is the real ‘life and soul’ of the Jiva instead of his gross body. But the ignorant world that can’t see beyond the gross things that are visible to it erroneously treats the gross inane body as the identity of the Jiva instead of the Atma or the soul which is the pure subtle consciousness that resides in the subtle space of the heart that lives inside the gross body of the Jiva.

²The pure conscious self of the Jiva is his Atma or soul which is said to have four states of existence: viz. Turiya, Sushupta, Swapna and Jagrat. The Jiva and the Atma are inseparable from one another, and in essence their truthful identity is nothing but pure consciousness that is uniform and unchanging. But in the context of the physical world in which the Jiva lives, the Atma displays four states of existence with varying degrees of awareness and attachment with the world. In the ‘Jagrat’ state the Jiva is fully involved physically in the affairs of the world and is affected by them. The same Jiva finds a bit of peace when he sleeps and dreams, as in this stage called ‘Swapna’ his physical body is at rest and only the mind and subconscious are busy and active. In the third stage known as ‘Sushupta’, even the mind becomes inactive and therefore the rest is complete. But this stage is short-lived as the Jiva reverts back to the Swapna and the Jagrat stages soon. In certain cases when the Jiva is enlightened and wise, he crosses the threshold and reaches the fourth stage of existence known as ‘Turiya’ when the bliss obtained in the Sushupta stage becomes more sustainable and permanent.

This great metaphysical concept of the Upanishads is cited here to emphasise that all the four brothers and their respective brides were like the same Jiva living in four states of consciousness. The brides and the grooms loved each other so much as if their were different bodies with the same heart. Or, it was like the same soul living in two bodies. Applied in a more holistic sense it may mean that though in physical terms there were four brothers and four brides but in essence they were the same Divine Lord who has manifested himself in their individual forms.

The four states of Consciousness and its relationship with the Jiva—According to the concepts of metaphysics, the ‘consciousness’ exists in four primary states within the body of the creature. These in descending order are the following—(i) the highest level known as ‘Turiya’ which is the transcendental state of existence, (ii) the next lower level known as ‘Sushupta’ which is equivalent to deep sleep state of consciousness, (iii) the third lower level and the second from the lowest as ‘Swapna’ which means dreaming state of consciousness, and (iv) the lowest level as ‘Jagrat’ which means the waking state of consciousness. Each state has its own unique virtues, characters and dynamism. Therefore, from the perspective of metaphysics, Lord Ram and Sita represent the Turiya state, Bharat and Maandavi the Sushupta state, Shatrughan and Srutkirti the Swapna state, and Laxman and Urmila the Jagrat state.

The reason for this association is this: Lord Ram is the Supreme Being known as Brahm or Super Consciousness, and his dynamic Shakti or power of action is Sita. Brahm is recognized in the transcendental state of consciousness, and not in its gross level. An ascetic is said to live in this Turiya state of meditative trance where he may appear to be going about his normal duties of the world but actually he remains aloof from everything

and sees everything with utmost detachment and neutrality like the case of Lord Ram. So, Lord Ram represents the 'Turiya state'.

The Turiya state and Sushupta state are closely linked with only a hair-line distinction between the two. Bharat and Lord Ram resembled each other in all matters—physical looks as well as at the temperamental level. Bharat was as calm and wise as Lord Ram. Even in the story we will read that while Lord Ram lived like a hermit in the forest, Bharat copied him in Ayodhya by living like a hermit in exile. Therefore, Bharat represents the 'Sushupta state', the state having close links with the Turiya state and resembling the latter. In the Sushupta state, the mind is unaware of the external world and remains in a blissful state of calmness and tranquility like the case of Bharat.

Laxman had accompanied Lord Ram to the forest and not only helped the Lord do all his daily chores but also was his comrade-in-arm in the epic war of Lanka and the rest of the story from start to finish. In other words, like the creature doing his duties in this mundane gross world during his waking state of life when all his organs of perceptions and actions interact with the world, Laxman helped Lord Ram in his worldly duties. Therefore, he represents the 'Jagrat state' or the waking state.

And finally we have Shatrughan who represented the 'Swapna state' as he remained active in this world but only in a symbolic and perfunctory way like a man remaining active in a world of dreams. He carried out the daily grind of the administrative affairs of the huge kingdom of Ayodhya because Bharat had taken voluntary exile and Laxman had gone with Lord Ram to actively help the Lord in the forest—but it was in a sanitized environment of the city of Ayodhya that was already in a state of gloom and grief due to the exile of Lord Ram; there was no excitement. Aside of routine work and daily chores, there was no excitement for Shatrughan unlike Laxman who had to face the daily uncertainty of the cruel environment of the unknown and uncharted forest.

Whatever Shatrughan did during the long 14 years of Lord Ram's exile remained unsung and unacknowledged by all—no where do we find any applause for Shatrughan and his skillful handling of the affairs of the kingdom during the Lord's absence. On the other hand, Laxman has been praised by everyone as he served Lord Ram in the forest and helped in winning the war of Lanka, but the role of Shatrughan was no less important in taking care of the kingdom of Ayodhya with as much diligence and effort as Lord Ram would have himself done. But like the case where a man does so many great deeds in his dream but these deeds remain unacknowledged and unrecognized in the physical world, Shatrughan remained unacknowledged and unrecognized by this gross world. It must not be forgotten that often a man finds solutions for his greatest problems related to the physical world while he sleeps and dreams of them, but when he implements the ideas that he got in his dream to overcome the problems of the physical world, only his actions that are taken in practice are observed and recognized by the external world which remains oblivious of the back-ground channel of the 'dream' where the solution and the direction for action was actually found or discovered by the concerned person.

That is why while Laxman's deeds were openly acknowledged and praised by all, Shatrughan, who maintained a very low profile and worked behind the curtains as it were, remained obscure. Hence, coming to our discussion, he is said to represent the 'Swapna or dreaming state' which is a combination of activity at the subtle level, and non-activity at the gross level of existence.

The four states of existence of the consciousness have been described in detail in the following Upanishads—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Trishikhi Brahman Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 149-150; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38; Subalo-panishad, Canto 4 full as well as Canto 9, verse no. 1-7; Paingalo-panishad, 2/11-16; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5; Turiyateet Upanishad. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 59-64, 72; Canto 4, verse no. 11-20; Brahmo-

panishad, verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 4; Shaarirak Upanishad, verse no. 14; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 11. (c) Atharva Veda tradition—Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Atharvashikha Upanishad; Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 1, 24-26; Canto 6, verse no. 3-4, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-16, 19-20; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-4 (in relation with Sri Ram and others), and verse nos. 5-8 (in relation with the Atma); Param Hans Parivarjak Upanishad, paragraph no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 25; Canto 2, verse nos. 12-16; Canto 3, verse nos. 10, 13, 16-18; Canto 5, verse nos. 16, 46, 84-85, 88-89, 109-111.

The Atma or the soul which is pure consciousness and true self of the creature has many states of existence according to metaphysics—e.g. the 1st state called the waking state or ‘Jagrat’, the 2nd state called the dreaming or ‘Swapna’, and the 3rd called the deep sleep state of consciousness or ‘Sushupta’. There is a 4th state also, and it is called ‘Turiya’, which is obtained as a result of going beyond the 3rd stage of deep sleep, and it is a permanent state of bliss and felicity in which the conscious Atma usually lives in ordinary people who are said to be self-realised. Beyond this 4th state is the Turiyateet, literally the state which is beyond the Turiya state and in which the Atma (pure consciousness) is free from all the encumbrances and characters displayed by it during the other four states. Therefore, Turiyateet would be the 5th state of existence of the Atma, and the higher transcendental state when the spiritual aspirant experiences oneness with Brahm. The Turiyateet state is the state of existence of ‘super-consciousness’ on a perpetual basis. Whereas the Turiya state is the hallmark of those who are self-realised, the Turiyateet state is the benchmark for those who are Brahm-realised. The Turiya state is the preliminary ground which paves the way for attaining the Turiyateet state.

To start with the understanding of these different states of existences of the consciousness, we have to begin with the fundamental two states in which the creature lives in this world. These two are the following—(1) the *waking* and (2) the *sleeping* states. For the purposes of analyzing the behaviour and existential states of the creature during these two fundamental stages, they have been classified into three distinct states as follows—the waking state called ‘Jagrat’, the dream state called ‘Swapna’, and the deep sleep state called ‘Sushupta’. Beyond these three, there are two transcendental states called Turiya and Turiyateet states of existence of the consciousness in which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation are possible, or which mark the state in which those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised exist. We will now endeavour to analyse all these five states of existence of the conscious Atma in simple terms in brief.

According to the *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11, there are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states of consciousness in this world. They are Vishwa (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), Taijas (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of consciousness), and Pragya (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

The Atharva Veda’s *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5 says that the four states of existence of consciousness, viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, and the Turiya or the post-Sushupta state, correspond to the four forms of divinity as represented by Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Rudra the concluder and the patron god of ascetics, and the Atma which is pure consciousness representing the supreme transcendental Brahm.

This notion of four states of consciousness vis-à-vis Lord Ram and his three brothers has been elaborately dealt with in Atharva Veda’s *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-4.]

दो०. मुदित अवधपति सकल सुत बधुन्ह समेत निहारि ।
जनु पाए महिपाल मनि क्रियन्ह सहित फल चारि ॥ ३२५ ॥

dōhā.

mudita avadhapati sakala suta badhunha samēta nihāri.
janu pā'ē mahipāla mani kriyanha sahita phala cāri. 325.

The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath) was jubilant as he watched his four sons alongside their respective brides. They appeared to symbolize the four fruits that the king got as rewards for his righteous and noble deeds and leading an auspicious life marked by probity and propriety. (Doha no. 325)

[Note-Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 158.

Earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309 we have read about the four great rewards for meritorious deeds that one does in his life. They are ‘Artha’ or financial well-being, ‘Dharma’ or fulfillment of all religious obligation, ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of one’s desires, and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation and emancipation. These four divine fruits are represented by the four glorious sons of king Dasrath.

Lord Ram stands for Moksha because he is a personified form of the Supreme Being who is the target for all spiritual aspirants who seek to find eternal liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death in this gross mundane world. Bharat stands for the ideals of Dharma because by his deeds and actions he had set a stellar example of a life of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct. Shatrughan stands for Artha because he had managed the finances and other affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya extremely well during the long time of 14 years when his other three brothers were absent from the city because of Lord Ram’s forest exile. And finally Laxman stood for Kaam as he is the one who had helped Lord Ram fulfill his desire of eliminating the cruel demons.

Their wives have been likened to their respective Shaktis or inherent strengths because all of them had contributed their might in helping their respective husbands fulfill their obligations and duties without creating any hindrance for them. Imagine the situation if Sita had not agreed with Lord Ram to let Ravana, the king of Lanka, abduct her so that the Lord can go and kill the entire lot of tyrannical demons, in spite of having to suffer a lot in the process.

Similarly, when Laxman decided to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, his wife Urmila did not come in the way and insist that he change his decision. Likewise, Bharat’s wife suffered loneliness and forced separation from her husband all through the 14 years of exile because Bharat chose to live like a hermit on the outskirts of Ayodhya for the entire duration of the period; she did not complain. And Shatrughan’s wife too helped her husband to carry on with his duties without instigating him to usurp the powers of the kingdom and misuse his authority for selfish gains and enjoyments.

The access to the ‘four fruits or rewards’ by king Dasrath as well as his queens who were blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of the world as their son known as Lord Ram has been referred to elsewhere also in the context of Lord Ram’s marriage in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309, and in Doha no. 345.]

चौ०. जसि रघुबीर व्याह बिधि बरनी । सकल कुँअर व्याहे तेहिं करनी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jasi raghubīra byāha bidhi baranī. sakala kumāra byāhē tēhiṁ karanī. 1.

All the princes were married in the same way and following the same rites as had been observed for the marriage of Lord Ram (“Raghubir”). (1)

[Note—An exactly the same idea in the same words have been conveyed by Tulsidas in “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 155.

While narrating the marriage of the three brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, no details have been given in Chanda line nos. 7-12 that precede Doha no. 325 herein above. So this verse is included by Tulsidas to remove all doubts regarding the way they were married—“they were all married in the same way as Lord Ram”.

It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram was so gracious that he had always shared all the pleasures of life, small or big, with his brothers. There are abundant examples of it. The marriage of all the four brothers simultaneously at the same venue and in the same family epitomizes this desire of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4 that precedes Doha no. 205; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 10.]

कहि न जाइ कछु दाइज भूरी । रहा कनक मनि मंडपु पूरी ॥ २ ॥
कंबल बसन बिचित्र पटोरे । भाँति भाँति बहु मोल न थोरे ॥ ३ ॥
गज रथ तुरग दास अरु दासी । धेनु अलंकृत कामदुहा सी ॥ ४ ॥
बस्तु अनेक करिअ किमि लेखा । कहि न जाइ जानहिं जिन्ह देखा ॥ ५ ॥

kahi na jā'i kachu dā'ija bhūrī. rahā kanaka mani maṇḍapu pūrī. 2.
kambala basana bicitra paṭōrē. bhāmṭi bhāmṭi bahu mōla na thōrē. 3.
gaja ratha turaga dāsa aru dāsī. dhēnu alaṅkr̥ta kāmāduhā sī. 4.
bastu anēka kari'a kimi lēkhā. kahi na jā'i jānahiṁ jinha dēkhā. 5.

[Verse nos. 2-5 describe the marriage gifts, known as ‘Dahej’¹, that was given by king Janak to all the grooms at the end of the marriage ceremony.]

It is not possible to describe the sort, the quality and the quantity of ‘Dahej’ or the marriage gifts that were collected at the pavilion to be given to the grooms. *The entire pavilion was full of gold, gems and other precious things.

[*This 2nd part of the verse can be read as follows also: “The golden pavilion was full of gems (and other things mentioned in verse no. 3) that were collected for the purpose of giving as Dahej on the occasion of the marriage.”] (2)

Different varieties of woolen blankets, cotton garments and ceremonial silk robes that were valuable and especially made for the occasion were there in abundance.² (3)

Besides these things (that were collected in huge heaps under the canopy of the main pavilion), there were elephants, chariots, horses and servants, both male and female (that collected outside and around the main pavilion)*. Then there were fully decorated milch cows that were like the Kamdhenu cow of the gods which is famous for giving an endless supply of milk.³ (4)

There were countless other things so innumerable in number and diverse in quality that it is not possible to account for them or list them. It is not possible to describe them either; only those who saw them knew how immense the gifts were, and even they failed to fully appreciate their quality, quantity and value. (5)

[Note—¹The “Dahej” is an age-old tradition wherein the bride’s father gives gifts to the newly married couple. Basically the idea is that the bride’s father gives all those things that a newly-wed couple would need to start a home—things of daily need such as clothes, utensils etc. Then he gives some jewellery to the bride to ensure her financial security. Other costly items include gems and things made of gold and silver. These also serve the same long-term purpose of financial security. Since this marriage was in a royal family, so items befitting a king were included—such as elephants, horses, chariots and servants. The idea is the same—that the newly wed couple can start a new home independently as a king and queen.

Amongst the various reasons behind this custom is that the bride’s father wished to tell the groom’s family that he is well-off and prosperous, and that therefore they shouldn’t taunt his daughter or her family on pecuniary grounds. His daughter has lived in comfort in her father’s home, and so she should be allowed the comfortable life she is accustomed to, and not to treat her as a maid.

The girl’s father wishes to convey the hint that he is giving his daughter in marriage to the groom not because he cannot sustain her financially or that she is any kind of burden on him, but because it is the custom of the society and sanctioned by the scriptures as this was the way the creator had devised the things in his plan to perpetuate life in this world.

²Pearls, gems and other precious metals such as gold and silver in the form of coins and ornaments etc. were collected in big bejeweled jars made of jade, sapphire and ruby and the like. Clothes, robes and blankets etc. of various denominations that were made of fine material with embroidery work done in golden and silver threads, and well decorated by an assortment of pearls and different types of gems and precious stones were arranged in huge bundles and stacked in the pavilion.

³The were assembled around the main platform where the marriage rituals were done, while the animals and the chariots were collected outside the pavilion.

Not only the cows, but all the other animals were also decorated. It was a usual practice for those who could afford it to adorn the gifted cow with gold on its horns and hooves, and embroidered clothes draped on its back. Since this was a marriage in a royal family it is natural to conclude that all the other animals such as the elephants and the horses were also likewise decorated. And obviously by extension, the chariots must also have been adequately adorned. The servants too were fully decked up in fine clothes and ornaments that would make them look dignified when they stood next to their respective masters.

*Amongst the servants, both males and females, who were sent by Janak with his four daughters, were those who had been serving the royal household for a long time and were personal attendants of the princesses. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 339. This was done to ensure that the daughters did not feel home-sick, were well-cared for and well-attended. These

attendants knew about their preferences and habits, and would help the four princesses feel comfortable and at-home in a completely new environment at their in-law's place.

There is another hidden reason behind this tradition of sending servants to accompany the bride. They would owe allegiance to her more than anyone else, and would virtually act as spies on the behalf of the bride's father to keep a close watch on her safety and well-being. Should anything go wrong and the girl feels the need to confide with someone with whom she is comfortable, these maid-servants and other attendants who had been serving her in her father's home will come to her aide and act as a safety-valve for her. They can even send a secret message to her father if the need arises.]

लोकपाल अवलोकि सिहाने । लीन्ह अवधपति सबु सुखु माने ॥ ६ ॥

lōkapāla avalōki sihānē. līnha avadhapati sabu sukhu mānē. 6.

All these marriage gifts (i.e. the Dahej) were appreciated and praised by all the Lokpals (custodians of the world—here meaning the many gods who were watching the marriage proceedings both in human forms who mingled with the crowd in the pavilion, as well as in their invisible form in the sky). King Dasrath of Ayodhya felt happy and accepted these gifts with grace. (6)

[Note—Dasrath wished to say “most welcome” to Janak, and this verse in effect means exactly this. When someone gives a gift it is good manners and courteous to accept it graciously with a smile and say thanks. It was not that Dasrath lacked anything; the kingdom of Ayodhya was very prosperous and well-to-do. His treasury was full to the brim. But he accepted whatever was given as Dahej in deference to Janak's sentiments and as a sign of showing great respect to him.

The fact that Ayodhya was a very prosperous kingdom comes to the fore on countless occasions as we read the story. For instance, one can read the following verses to get an idea of its wealth and prosperity: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) at the time of Lord Ram's birth in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (b) at the time the auspicious news of marriage of Lord Ram with Sita arrived in Ayodhya from Janakpur in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297; (c) at the time the marriage party arrived in Ayodhya with the four brides as described from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324 it is said that Ayodhya was a kingdom whose majesty and glory was praised by even the king of gods, and its wealth and prosperity made the treasurer of gods ashamed of his own wealth.

The idea is that Dasrath did not accept these gifts because he was greedy for easy wealth, but as gesture of respect for Janak. Obviously it would be highly uncivilized, impolite, rude and uncourteous for Dasrath if he had refused to accept anything that Janak gave.

We will read in the next line no. 7 that soon after accepting the gifts, Dasrath liberally gave away whatever was asked by alms-seekers who flocked around him to accept gifts that the groom's father gives as a token of his joy.]

दीन्ह जाचकन्हि जो जेहि भावा । उबरा सो जनवासेहिं आवा ॥ ७ ॥

dinha jācakanhi jō jēhi bhāvā. ubarā sō janavāsēhiṁ āvā. 7.

Whatever was asked of king Dasrath by the (countless) alms-seekers, he gave them liberally, and without reservations¹. After these formalities were over, he (Dasrath) came to the palace where the marriage party had been lodged. (7)

[Note—¹Whenever there was a happy occasion, alms-seekers used to assemble around the chief patron to get gifts. Not that these alms-seekers were paupers or beggars, but they sought gifts as a token of rejoicing and celebration when one gives and accepts gifts, such as during festivals and other ceremonial events. These alms-seekers then themselves liberally donated and cheerfully gave away to others what they had got as gifts. This is very clear when we read Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Dasrath was a charitable person with a broad, magnanimous heart who enjoyed giving liberally whatever anyone wanted and whatever came his way as is clear elsewhere also—refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 351.

Even his queens followed his example and gave away liberally and with open hands—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

तब कर जोरि जनकु मृदु बानी । बोले सब बरात सनमानी ॥ ८ ॥

taba kara jōri janaku mṛdu bānī. bōlē saba barāta sanamānī. 8.

Then (i.e. after king Dasrath was duly honoured and marriage gifts were handed over to him on behalf of the grooms, and he left the venue for his residence as stated in Chaupai line nos. 2-7 herein above), king Janak joined his palms as a sign of showing great respect to all other members of the marriage party and spoke to them sweetly, exchanging greetings and pleasantries with them. (8)

[Note—The father-in-law of the bride, i.e. king Dasrath was the chief guest on the occasion of the marriage ceremony. He was shown full attention. When he left the venue and retired to his place of lodging, king Janak duly honoured the rest of the marriage party by meeting each individual member and exchanging sweet pleasantries with them.

The following Chanda verses continue with this exchange of pleasantries and the events that followed them.]

छं०. सनमानि सकल बरात आदर दान बिनय बड़ाइ कै । १ ।

chanda.

sanamāni sakala barāta ādara dāna binaya baṛā'i kai. 1.

[The previous Chaupai verses have dealt primarily with the conduct of the marriage rites and the accompanying formality of giving of marriage gifts known in local parlance as Dahej-giving at the end of them. Now in these following Chanda verses we read that

Janak has shown respect to all the members of the marriage party and made them all happy by his courteousness, good manners, simplicity and affection for all of them.]

He (king Janak) duly honoured the entire marriage party by showing great respect to all its members individually by way of polite prayers and giving abundant gifts to them. (Chanda line no. 1)

[Note—We have read in earlier Chaupai line no. 8 that Janak faced the members of the groom's party, speaking politely with them and exchanging pleasantries. These Chanda verses build upon that premise and describe how he pleased each member of the marriage party individually as well as in the form of their groups.]

प्रमुदित महा मुनि बृन्द बंदे पूजि प्रेम लड़ाइ कै ॥ २ ॥

pramudita mahā muni bṛnda bandē pūji prēma laṛā'i kai. 2.

The great sages present there felt very delighted at the way the marriage ceremony was conducted with great grace, honour and dignity by Janak, and by the most courteous and polite way he showed his respect to the entire marriage party as well as to these sages themselves.

Then the king worshipped and paid his obeisance to all the other Brahmins and elders of the groom's party with great expression of affection towards all of them. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—The marriage party consisted not only of noble men, courtiers, ministers and senior citizens of Ayodhya but also of great sages and Brahmins as well as elders of the society. So Janak had attended to each one of them individually in accordance with his standing and position in the hierarchy of the society and royalty. Since sages, Brahmins and elders should be shown special respect and their blessings sought by the host, Janak took care to address this aspect of hospitality by worshipping them and paying his obeisance to them in a special manner befitting their stature. This would obviously make them pleased.]

सिरु नाइ देव मनाइ सब सन कहत कर संपुट किएँ । ३ ।

सुर साधु चाहत भाउ सिंधु कि तोष जल अंजलि दिएँ ॥ ४ ॥

siru nā'i dēva manā'i saba sana kahata kara samputa ki'ēm̃. 3.

sura sādhu cāhata bhā'u sindhuki tōṣa jala anjali di'ēm̃. 4.

After that, king Janak offered his obeisance to the gods by bowing his head reverentially before them. He joined his palms in prayer and submitted [3]—‘Gods and holy men seek nothing but love and submission (i.e. they are fully contented and want nothing else but respect and affection from others). Say, is it ever possible to actually fill the ocean by offering a palm-full cup of water as done when one offers performs his daily ritual of offering oblations to it?’¹

[Note—¹That is, though the mighty ocean, which is the largest reservoir of water on earth, does not need any more water to make it full, but still it expects that others at least show their respect to its greatness by offering oblations to it. A mere cup-full of water is like a speck of sand on the vast stretch of the desert or the shore line covered with tons

and tons of sand, but it still satisfies the ocean because it is a token of respect that the worshipper offers to the ocean to acknowledge the fact that the water which is brought down to him in the form of rain that sustains life on earth and is likened to the elixir of life known as Amrit owes its origin to the ocean.

The ocean that gulps down endless flows of great rivers gushing down into it from the time the earth was created but still never overflows its bank, and neither does it say that it is full and so it does not need any more water from these rivers, the same ocean feels contented by a mere cup of water offered to it by a worshipper. In other words, the only thing the ocean expects is respect, and nothing else.

Similarly, the only thing the great gods and holy men expect is respect and honourable treatment. They are not hungry or thirsty for anything else.

Hence, when king Janak offered his obeisance to the sages, the Brahmins and other elders present on the occasion (as in Chanda line no. 2), as well as the gods and holy men (as in Chanda line no. 3), all of them felt extremely delighted and blessed the king. In this sense, Chanda line nos. 2-3 can be combined to give a greater effect to their broader meaning.]

कर जोरि जनकु बहोरि बंधु समेत कोसलराय सों । ५ ।
 बोले मनोहर बयन सानि सनेह सील सुभाय सों ॥ ६ ॥
 संबंध राजन रावरें हम बड़े अब सब बिधि भए । ७ ।
 एहि राज साज समेत सेवक जानिबे बिनु गथ लए ॥ ८ ॥
 ए दारिका परिचारिका करि पालिबीं करुना नई । ९ ।
 अपराधु छमिबो बोलि पठए बहुत हौं ढीट्यो कई ॥ १० ॥

kara jōri janaku bahōri bandhu samēta kōsalarāya sōm. 5.
 bōlē manōhara bayana sāni sanēha sīla subhāya sōm. 6.
 sambandha rājana rāvarēm hama barē aba saba bidhi bha'ē. 7.
 ēhi rāja sāja samēta sēvaka jānibē binu gatha la'ē. 8.
 ē dārikā paricārikā kari pālibīm karunā na'ī. 9.
 aparādhu chamibō bōli paṭha'ē bahuta haurm dhītyō ka'ī. 10.

[After having paid his obeisance to the sage, Brahmins, elders, gods and holy men present on the occasion, king Janak turned to king Dasrath, the father of his son-in-laws, and offered his due respects to him in Chanda line nos. 5-10.]

Then king Janak, along with his brother (i.e. younger brother Kushdhwaj), stood most gracefully and humbly before the king of Kaushal (which is another name for Ayodhya; i.e. king Dasrath) [5], and paid his tribute to him by submitting himself before him and speaking very sweetly, using polite words that were very courteous and full of affection as follows—[6]

‘Your great Majesty! We have been immensely honoured in all possible ways by the virtue of our connection, our association and our ties with your honourable self [7].

All of us, i.e. at our individual level as well as at the level of the kingdom at large, submit ourselves unconditionally before you. From now onwards you can treat all of us

as your humble and obedient servants. [That is, we are ready to serve you in any way you please, without obligations!] [8]

Treat these innocent and inexperienced girls (our daughters) with the greatest of kindness and love [9], and forgive them for any mistakes of commission and omission that they may make. Besides this, please excuse me for giving you the trouble of calling you from such a great distance to this place* [10].’ (Chanda line nos. 5-10)

[Note—In these verses, king Janak has offered his respects to king Dasrath and has politely requested him to treat the four newly wed girls, who are now onwards his daughters-in-law, with the greatest of love and care as he would have shown to his own daughters. These four brides, i.e. Sita and her sister Urmila, as well as her cousins Maandavi and Srutkirti, are going to a new home of which they have no idea. They are unaware of its customs, routine and ways of life and expectations from them. The brides would be far away from home and surrounded by complete strangers in the initial days of their life in Ayodhya before they become fully acquainted with their new relations and become accustomed to their in-laws’ household and the way of life there.

So Dasrath was requested by Janak to be extra careful and be diligent in acting the part of a loving father-in-law who is expected to make his daughter-in-law feel fully comfortable and at ease in the new home as if it was her original parent’s home.

*Janak was extremely polite, and it is evident in this statement of his. What he means is this—“Ordinarily, a junior king goes to pay his respects or tributes to the senior king, or the emperor. The process of marriage that was chosen for marrying my daughter Sita was a ‘Swayambar’, which literally means ‘self-chosen bride or groom’, in which the qualified candidate marries the girl in a very brief ceremony without the necessity of having to go through the elaborate process that is required under the traditional system of marriage which entails a lot of formalities such as elaborate rituals and their accompanying ceremonies, as well as the requirement of the presence of the groom’s parents amongst other things.

So, formally I could have avoided giving you the trouble of coming all the way from Ayodhya to Janakpur to attend the marriage of Sita with your son Ram. I could have solemnised the marriage and send the couple with my senior priest and other senior citizens to Ayodhya. Or better still, I could have accompanied the newly married couple myself and paid a visit to Ayodhya.

But sir, I had to give you the trouble to come to Janakpur as it was the express order of sage Vishwamitra (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287).

Nevertheless, I am extremely glad that you came as it not only gave me the honour and privilege of serving you personally but also of strengthening the bond of affection and friendship between the two of us at the individual level as well as between our two great kingdoms by getting all my daughters, mine and my brother’s, married to your excellent sons. What more would I want; what more could I have prayed for? I feel that today, I am the most blessed king on the face of earth!]

पुनि भानुकुलभूषन सकल सनमान निधि समधी किए। ११।

कहि जाति नहिं बिनती परस्पर प्रेम परिपूरन हिए॥ १२॥

puni bhānukulabhūṣana sakala sanamāna nidhi samadhī ki’ē. 11.

kahi jāti nahim binaṭi paraspara prēma paripūrana hi’ē. 12.

After king Janak had shown his respect and courtesy to king Dasrath who was a gem in the glorious solar race¹, the latter reciprocated the warm gestures of king Janak by being immensely courteous and extremely polite towards him in all possible ways as he had been to Dasrath². (Chanda line no. 11)

They were so affectionate and polite towards each other, and the reciprocal way they prayed and offered their respects to each other with their hearts brimming over with love and affection that it is not possible to describe any part of it³. (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹King Dasrath is compared to the ‘sun’ in the solar race. This is a metaphor to mean that out of so many kings in this race, Dasrath was the most fortunate and glorious king. He had the Supreme Being as his son in the form of Lord Ram, and this fact in itself lifts him to the highest stature of human existence. Like the sun that shines bright and clear in the sky and outshines the rest of the celestial bodies, including the moon that is the king of the night sky, Dasrath’s glory and fame outshone the rest of the kings of this race.

²Dasrath was well-versed with the ways of protocol as he was a great emperor who had been welcoming and showing respects to great kings, sages, Brahmins and gods all through his life. In the case of Janak he took special care to express his friendship and affection by being extremely courteous and polite because all his sons have now been married to all the daughters of Janak and his brother Kushdhvaj. This marriage had created a special inviolable relationship between these two great kings and their kingdoms. Being the senior of the two, Dasrath went out of his way to make Janak comfortable and happy. For all practical purposes, Dasrath was now the de-facto elder brother of Janak, and the two vowed to stand by each other in thick and thin.

Dasrath showed so much affection, honour and respect for Janak that the latter was virtually swept of his feet with these expressions; Janak was overwhelmed by Dasrath’s politeness and affectionate gestures.

³This mutual show of respect and honour must have gone on for some time and become progressively intense so much so that each one of them seemed overwhelmed by the affection of the other.]

बृंदारका गन सुमन बरिसहिं राउ जनवासेहि चले । १३ ।

दुंदुभी जय धुनि बेद धुनि नभ नगर कौतूहल भले ॥ १४ ॥

br̥ṇḍārakā gana sumana barisahim̐ rā'u janavāsēhi calē. 13.

duṇḍubhī jaya dhuni bēda dhuni nabha nagara kautūhala bhalē. 14.

The gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven) as the king (Dasrath) made his way to his lodging place. (Chanda line no. 13)

There was a cacophony of sounds created by the beating of the kettle-drums, exclamatory loud applause of cheer, and the chanting of the hymns of the Vedas. There was a tumult in the sky (the heaven from where the gods were watching the proceeding on the ground) as well as in the city (of Janakpur). (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—After the formalities and exchange of greetings and pleasantries were over, Dasrath took his leave and proceeded towards the palace where he and other members of the marriage party were lodged.

At that time, there was all-round celebration—both in the heaven as well as in the city.]

तब सखीं मंगल गान करत मुनीस आयसु पाइ कै । १५ ।
दूलह दुलहिनन्ह सहित सुंदरि चलीं कोहबर ल्याइ कै ॥ १६ ॥

taba sakhīm maṅgala gāna karata munīsa āyasu pā'i kai. 15.
dūlaha dulaheininha sahita sundari calīm kōhabara lyā'i kai. 16.

Then, upon receiving orders from the chief sage (i.e. sage Vasistha), the pretty companions of the brides began singing auspicious songs befitting the occasion. They then escorted the brides and their respective grooms to the room where the family deities had been kept for offering of worship by the newly wed couples at the end of the marriage ceremony. [This ritual is known as “Kohabar”.] (Chanda line nos. 15-16)

[Note—When the marriage rituals are finished, the groom’s father and other family members as well as the rest of the marriage party go back to the place where they are lodged. But the groom and the bride are brought to the room in the bride’s home where the couple offer worship to the family deities. This is “Kohabar”.

Remember: All the four brothers have been married simultaneously here, so when the time for doing the ritual of Kohabar arrived, all of them were escorted by the lady-friends of the four princesses from the marriage pavilion to the palace of king Janak where the family deities would be worshipped by the four couples. Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 146.

An interesting development occurs now. On the way from the platform where the main marriage rituals were done, to the room where the Kohabar is to be done, Tulsidas has taken a pause. He now takes a break from the narration of events associated with the wedding ceremony to describe the personal chemistry between Lord Ram and Sita in Doha no. 326 that follows herein below. The poet-devotee heart of Tulsidas got the better of him for some moments as this great saint forgot for a moment what he was describing a while ago, i.e. he forgot to go ahead with the narration of the Kohabar and other rituals that followed it, but paused and began describing the wonderful, out-of-the-world and fabulously beautiful image of Lord Ram who was the Lord he adored and worshipped in his heart and mind.

Therefore, we pause for a while now in our reading of the events and formal rituals associated with the marriage, and instead read about the eye-catching, bewitching beauty of Lord Ram ‘through the eyes of Sita’.

This is a fantastic moment—Tulsidas is describing the beauty of Lord Ram as a groom not in the manner he wishes to describe, but in the way Sita herself saw the Lord. The wise Tulsidas has made Sita a witness of his description of Lord Ram’s glamorous beauty as a groom. This is absolutely clear when we consider the fact that Doha no. 326, which says that Sita repeatedly glances at Lord Ram and is overwhelmed by the fabulous sight she saw, acts as a prelude of the actual description of the beauty of the form of Lord Ram as narrated in the verses, i.e. Chaupai line nos. 1-10, immediately following this Doha.

After he is finished with describing the beauty of the form of his Lord, Tulsidas virtually wakes up from his sentimental reverie and resumes his narration of the marriage rituals from Chanda line no. 1 that follows the last line no. 10 of the set of Chaupais of ten verses herein below that describe the Lord’s exquisite beauty.]

दो०. पुनि पुनि रामहि चितव सिय सकुचति मनु सकुचै न ।

हरत मनोहर मीन छबि प्रेम पिआसे नैन ॥ ३२६ ॥

dōhā.

puni puni rāmaḥi citava siya sakucati manu sakucai na.
harata manōhara mīna chabi prēma pi'āsē naina. 326.

Sita repeatedly glanced at Lord Ram in a shy and surreptitious manner, though her heart kept her inspiring to keep her gaze fixed on the Lord. [In other words, Sita wanted to keep her eyes fixed on her beloved, Lord Ram, but out of modesty she could not look at him with a fixed stare though her heart egged her to do so. So, she once looked at him, then looked away, and once again glanced back at him.]

Her persistent efforts to watch the Lord with intense love and affection in her eyes reminded one of the fish whose eyes are constantly open in the water.¹ (Doha no. 236)

[Note—¹The fish does not remain static in water; it is constantly moving from one point to another. Likewise, Sita is moving towards the place where the family deities are to be worshipped. All along the way, she sheepishly casts sideways glances at Lord Ram, but cannot fix her eyes steadily on the Lord because she has to keep walking under the constant vigil of her friends who are accompanying her and have surrounded her on all sides as they escort the couple towards the ritual of doing Kohabar. Even once she has reached there, she has to do so many worship rituals that she can't stand with peace and look straight at Lord Ram. Therefore, her situation is akin to the fish.

Even when the fish is in water it keeps its eyes wide open unlike us who would be forced to close ours when we are under water. Hence, Sita had kept her eyes open and focused on Lord Ram though she had to walk and keep her attention on the ground in order to avoid tripping and falling over. Even in the Kohabar room she engaged in doing physical rituals with her eyes focused on Lord Ram.

Another idea in using the metaphor of the fish is that Sita did not as much as blink her eyes in order not to miss even a second of looking at Lord Ram.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 327 herein below.]

चौ०. स्याम सरीरु सुभायँ सुहावन । सोभा कोटि मनोज लजावन ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

syāma sarīru subhāyam̐ suhāvana. sōbhā kōṭi manōja lajāvana. 1.

[The entire set of 10 lines in this Chaupai describes the beautiful form of Lord Ram as a bridegroom.]

He (Lord Ram) had a dark complexion¹ which was inherently most beautiful and so bewitchingly charming to behold that it put to shame the beauty and charm of countless Kamdeos (cupids) who prides himself for his physical glamour and attractiveness². (1)

[Note—The out-of-the-world magnificent beauty of Lord Ram as a groom has also been elaborately described by Tulsidas in his book “Geetawali” in its Baal Kand, verse no. 1/108. Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 10.

Lord Ram’s extraordinary beauty and charm as a prince who is most suitable to marry Sita who herself was the most beautiful girl of her time (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251) has been described elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8 at the time the two brothers had gone to see the sights of the city of Janakpur when they had first arrived there, and once again as Sita saw them in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 233 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 221; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 316.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243.

It must be remembered that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the latter possesses this wonderful swarthy-complexioned form that would put countless Kamdeos to shame as endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 146.

In this context it ought to be noted that the divine form of Lord Vishnu that is described in Ram Charit Manas (Baal Kand, from Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148) fits in perfectly, point to point, with the glorious form of Lord Ram that is being described in these current verses as well as anywhere else in the entire spread of Ram Charit Manas.]

जावक जुत पद कमल सुहाए । मुनि मन मधुप रहत जिन्ह छाए ॥ २ ॥

jāvaka juta pada kamala suhā'ē. muni mana madhupa rahata jinha chā'ē. 2.

His lotus-like feet that were coloured red by application of a dye¹ looked as wonderful as a blooming and healthy lotus flower that is brimming-over with nectar over which the thirsty bees representing the Mana (mind and heart) of great sages and hermits are hovering to get a chance to drink it². (2)

[Note—¹The feet of the groom as well as the bride are painted with a red dye made of melted lac.

²Refer similar views are expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 221; (ii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 231.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17 that Bharat always kept his mind and heart devoted to Lord Ram’s feet just like the honey-bee that does not wish to move away from the nectar that is present in the lotus flower.]

पीत पुनीत मनोहर धोती । हरति बाल रबि दामिनि जोती ॥ ३ ॥

pīta punīta manōhara dhōtī. harati bāla rabi dāmini jōtī. 3.

The yellow-coloured clean ‘Dhoti’ (a single-piece body wrapping garment worn by males) made of silk that he wore was glistening with radiance so much that it virtually outshone the colour and beauty of the nascent sun as it rises in the eastern horizon as well as the splendour and the dazzle of lightening (as it streaks across the sky). (3)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 244.]

कल किंकिनि कटि सूत्र मनोहर । बाहु बिसाल बिभूषन सुंदर ॥ ४ ॥

kala kiṅkini kaṭi sūtra manōhara. bāhu bisāla bibhūṣana sundara. 4.

The waist-band with small chiming bells that he wore around his hip, as well as his long muscular arms that were adorned with beautiful ornaments together looked absolutely charming. (4)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 147; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219.]

पीत जनेउ महाछबि देई । कर मुद्रिका चोरि चितु लेई ॥ ५ ॥

pīta janē'u mahāchabi dē'ī. kara mudrikā cōri citu lē'ī. 5.

The sacred thread of a yellow colour (pīta janē'u) that he wore across his chest gave his divine form a sense of enhanced beauty and dignity (because not only this yellow colour of the thread matched with the yellow colour of the Dhoti that the Lord wore, but it also showed that he belonged to a noble race and had been duly initiated or baptised in accordance with the custom of the higher echelons of the society).¹

The ring that he wore on his finger*² appeared to steal (i.e. enchant, captivate, enthrall) the mind of the beholder³. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 147; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244.

²This is the marriage-ring that the groom is offered by the bride at the time of formalisation of their marriage. This is the reason why there has been no mention of a 'ring' earlier while the physical beauty and charm of Lord Ram has been described in Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

*Some very interesting observations can be made in connection with this 'ring' at this juncture. As is the custom, the bride and the groom exchange rings during the marriage rituals as a token of exchanging vows to remain tied to each other permanently and bonded with each other in an unbreakable seamless bond like the ring whose two ends are so carefully forged and melded into each other that no one can say where the first end begins and the last end ends. Likewise, the relationship that has been created as a result of this marriage would also remove the distinction between the two individual identities of the boy and the girl, and therefore hence forward they should not only be treated by the world as being 'one', but they should also treat each other without any distinction whatsoever.

The ring that Lord Ram gave Sita bore the insignia of the royal kingdom of Ayodhya as well as the initials of the Lord, viz. the single letter 'Ra' with an 'anuswar' (dot) on the top. This is pronounced as 'Raang', and it is the Beej Mantra (seed Mantra or basic spiritual formula) that enables the spiritual aspirant to meditate upon the cosmic form of Lord Ram as Brahm, the supreme liberator as well as the ultimate destination of the soul of the creature the attainment of which stature leads to the final emancipation and salvation of the soul.

Similarly, the one which Sita exchanged with him bore the symbol of the kingdom of Janakpur and the initials of Sita, which is the letter 'Sa'. This letter is the 2nd part of the eclectic Baaj Mantra "Hans" which ascetics use for meditation. This letter means 'It' or 'That is', and the letter 'Han' means 'Me'. In totality this Mantra means 'it is me', i.e. the ultimate truth of existence is my soul known as the pure conscious Atma, and it is my true identity. Therefore, this letter 'Sa' representing Sita and etched on the ring that she gave to Lord Ram during the exchange of rings as a part of the wedding custom implied that she wishes to tell the Lord that now onwards her true identity is the Lord himself. And simultaneously reminding the Lord that she, Sita, is as close to him as his own soul—'It is me'.

We read in the story that when Lord Ram was going to the forest and had crossed the river Ganges, he wanted to give some reward to the boatman (Kewat) who rowed him, Sita and Laxman across the river. But the problem was that he had left Ayodhya dressed as a hermit, and even Sita had discarded all her ornaments when she accompanied the Lord. They didn't have anything of material value to give the boatman. So then Sita took-off her ring and gave it to Lord Ram so that he can in turn give it to the boatman. But the boatman refused to accept it out of his empathy for the Lord's present condition that he was going to the forest as a hermit without possessions and had nothing to give, as well as a mark of his devotion and surrender for the Lord whom he recognised as the Supreme Lord in a human form. The boatman had wisely observed that Sita had taken her own ring out from her finger and the Lord was giving it to him. It would have been very greedy and inhuman for the boatman had he even shown a trace of willingness to take it. He would have been like a greedy vulture who feeds upon flesh of those who are lying wounded in the battle-field and already suffering intensely. Or like a greedy money-lender who would not hesitate to suck the last drop of blood from unfortunate people who are unable to pay him back, if this drop of blood could transform into money by sale in the market! Or like those greedy men roaming in the cremation ground who would extract a gold-plated tooth from a dead body or rob corpses of the little bit of jewellery that they can find on them.

Now, when the wise boatman refused to accept the ring, Sita did not take it back. Why? This is because once something has been given to someone as a token of service rendered by the latter, or even as a gift or charity, its ownership ends with the giver, and then it would be highly wrong for the giver to take it back right then and there. Therefore, this ring was kept by Lord Ram. There was no problem in this—because the ring did not belong to Lord Ram, but to Sita. Lord Ram was merely a medium that was used by Sita to give it to the boatman. And since it could not be thrown away or given to someone else because it was the marriage ring that was given to her at the time of wedding, so the Lord decided to keep it. This incident of Sita giving the ring to Lord Ram for giving it to Kewat, the boatman, and his refusal to accept it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 102 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Later on in the story we read that when the search party of monkeys and bears was sent in search of Sita, Lord Ram had given a ring to Hanuman to take it to Sita as a token of identification so that she would be able to recognise him as the Lord's messenger. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 13 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The next question is—which ring was it? It was either of the two rings—the one that Lord Ram had kept with him when the boatman refused to accept it at the time of crossing of the river Ganges, and the other could have been the one that Lord Ram was given by Sita at the time of marriage and he had been wearing it ever since.

The answer is that it was the marriage ring of Lord Ram bearing his signature that was sent to Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 13.

Though Lord Ram had discarded all his royal ornaments while donning the robes of a hermit at the time of departure for the forest from Ayodhya, in all probabilities he had retained his marriage ring. It was obligatory for him to keep wearing the marriage ring, and it is also sanctioned by the scriptures because his wife was with him; they hadn't divorced in which eventuality he would have been expected to remove the marriage ring. Even Sita and Laxman had discarded all their royal ornaments and paraphernalia at the time of departure for the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (ii) Doha no. 33.

In all probability, Lord Ram had given Hanuman the ring of Sita so that she could recognise it very easily. Besides this 'recognition' factor, the ring bore the initials of Lord Ram which would serve as a great morale booster and a source of moral support for the forlorn Sita during her lonely and pitiful days in captivity at Lanka.

Now, what was the message that Lord Ram wished to convey through this ring to Sita aside of it being a sort of identification for Hanuman to help her know he was an authentic messenger of the Lord?

It was a sort of reprimand for Sita and a subtle warning to her to overcome ego first if she desires redemption by Lord Ram. The ring would remind her of her stubborn nature when she had declined to take back it back when the boatman had refused to accept it, forcing Lord Ram to keep it with him: she had pretended to be too righteous to take back a thing which was assigned to or given to someone else as a gift. She had learnt a bitter lesson in the meanwhile, and therefore she has now accepted, with great affection, the same ring that she had refused earlier. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13.

At the time of taking the ring back when the boatman had declined to accept it from Lord Ram, Sita had not realized one mistake she was making: that since this ring was the 'marriage ring', by not accepting it she was virtually breaking her ties with the Lord. But that was not her intention at all, and the Lord was aware of it. Her idea was noble—not to take back anything that is given to someone once. So, he politely kept the ring with him for some later day opportunity to return it to Sita. And this opportunity came when he had to give something to Hanuman as a sign of his being a messenger from the Lord and not some cunning imposter sent by Ravana to deceive Sita. That is why Lord Ram chose to give this ring to Hanuman to return it to Sita.

The Lord also wished to convey a message to Sita that he would come to her rescue only if she accepts this 'marriage ring' as a reaffirmation of her loyalty and allegiance to the Lord. Sita got the hint, and that is why she accepted it with the greatest of affection and with tears of affection and remembrance in her eyes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 13.

Now, how would Lord Ram know that Sita had reaffirmed her submission to the Lord and it was time he acted to free her from the captivity of the demons? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 27.

The other connotation and spin to this episode related to the "ring" is this: Lord Ram is the supreme Brahm, the Lord of creation whose cosmic form is Lord Vishnu. Brahm does not do anything himself, but it is his dynamic powers known as Shakti that does it for him. This Shakti has revealed itself as Sita. Sita had come down to earth to help Lord Ram accomplish his divine mission of freeing the earth from the tyranny of the cruel demons. We read in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas that when Lord Ram was reluctant to go to the forest in order to embark on his mission of eliminating the demons

and their ruler Ravana of Lanka because he could not bear the sight of grieving and weeping citizens of Ayodhya being left behind him to suffer grief of separation from their beloved Lord, it was Sita who had climbed the chariot, that was brought by Sumanta, the chief charioteer of the kingdom, first, and then caught hold of Lord Ram's hand and pulled him on board. Laxman followed behind Lord Ram. This is clearly narrated in *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 43-44.

The idea is that Sita virtually told Lord Ram—"Look Lord, you have not come down to earth to get entangled in worldly attachments to become mired in emotions and trapped by sentiments. For you a greater mission is pending ahead. It has to be done. How can we finish our divine mission if you allow yourself to be overcome with worldly emotions and forget that you are expected to be neutral and detached from all grossness associated with this world? Tell me, if you become so emotional and sentimental, what would happen when the time comes for the elimination of demons at Lanka; you will start showing mercy on them and their wailing families. Say then, how will the demons be eliminated? So come on and desist from being emotional. Get on the chariot and let's move ahead to the forest."

Sita, being the 'Shakti' of the supreme Brahman, knew her task clearly and what was to be done. So, in the intervening period from the time of leaving Ayodhya and crossing of river Ganges, she observed that Lord Ram was sad and remorseful when he remembered how the citizens of Ayodhya were gravely grieving for him, how king Dasrath was wailing and lamenting, how Bharat would burst out in grief when he learns that his beloved brother Lord Ram has gone to the forest for enduring hardship for fourteen long years because of him, and so on. Though Lord Ram maintained an exterior of calmness and poise, internally a storm of grief had overcome him. Sita was closely observing all this. So she decided to step in: she, being Brahman's Shakti and a part of Brahman, thought that may be Lord Ram would not allow her to be kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king, and hear her wailing. If this is not allowed by the Lord then the entire mission of slaying the cruel demons would fail even before it started—because it was imperative that Sita is taken hostage by Ravana so that an excuse is found by the Lord to go to Lanka in order to rescue her, and kill the ferocious and immoral demons in the process.

So what should be done now, thought Sita. She got an opportunity when something was to be given to the boatman. She decided to give her marriage ring and indicate to the Lord that all his worldly relationships with her—that she was his beloved wife—are snapped forthwith! Lord Ram should stop treating her as his 'wife' now onwards, but concentrate on the divine mission of the gods for which he and she have come down to earth. Since the formal relationship of a husband and wife is symbolized by the 'marriage ring' that they wear, with Sita discarding this ring she indicated to Lord Ram that she is no longer his worldly wife but the cosmic Shakti who is accompanying him to fulfill the divine mission of the gods.

Therefore, the Lord should remember that when the time comes for her abduction by Ravana, he should let it proceed in accordance to plan and not create an unnecessary hindrance because Sita was his wife and she can't be separated from him at any cost. Well, the 'separation' is done now when the marriage ring was returned to the Lord by Sita herself, so there was no question of regrets and reluctance in allowing her being kidnapped by Ravana.

The next question in this context is: Why then was the ring sent by Lord Ram to Sita during her captivity in Lanka? It was to tell her that if she did not accept it with affection, Lord Ram will take it that she does not wish to restore the old ties once again. It was alright to break the relationship at the time of commencement of the forest journey by returning the ring on the banks of the river Ganges because it helped the Lord to become wise and overcome his emotional attachments with Sita so that the job at hand can be

done in a clinical, efficient manner without any sentimental tampering. But that intention of Sita is accomplished: she has reached inside the fortress of the demons. Now it is the time to reiterate the eternal, unbreakable and inviolable bond that exists between Brahm and Shakti. So, Lord Ram, the personified form of Brahm, reiterates this eternal relationship by sending the ring to Sita, the personified form of Shakti, and this is why she gladly accepts it.

We read that Sita not only accepts the ring but reaffirms her loyalty and allegiance to Lord Ram by sending her 'Chudaamani' (a hairpin that was studded with gems and given to her at the time of marriage when vermilion powder was applied on her head by Lord Ram during the marriage rituals in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 325) to him through Hanuman (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27).

Sending of this hair-pin is a symbolic gesture by Sita to indicate to the Lord that she is bowing her head before him and surrendering herself to him. Lord Ram gladly accepts this hair-pin with the greatest of affection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.

³This is a wonderful and fascinating metaphor that would make a discerning reader done his thinking-cap and ponder on its metaphysical and spiritual import. The 'ring' is round in shape just like a circular enclosure. This particular ring was worn by Lord Ram when he married Sita, it was a 'marriage ring', implying that he has voluntarily got himself permanently tied to the affairs of this world and responsibilities of a married life. From the perspective of the philosophy of the Upanishads that emphasise detachment from all things related to this gross world, this ring symbolically implies that the Lord has got himself trapped in a snare of worldly responsibilities and their attendant chain of miseries and grief, of joy and sorrows.

We find that this is what exactly happened with Lord Ram. After marriage he had to go to exile in the forest where his wife Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana, which plunged the Lord as well as Sita in grief for a long time. This was followed by the difficult phase when Lord Ram had to trek all the way to Kishkindha where he met the monkey friends, and then from there he had to go to the southern ocean to cross it and launch a bloody assault on Lanka to free Sita which resulted in the epic war. In his final days on earth he had to abandon Sita once again, and finally depart from the world grieving for her.

In short, all his worries, troubles and entanglements with the world were symbolised by this 'ring'. In other words, those who watched the beautiful image of Lord Ram going through the steps of the ritual of marriage also got deluded to think that the Supreme Being 'has married', a proposition that is as ludicrous as it is false. The supreme Brahm is formless; he has no attributes as are being described in relation with Lord Ram. Brahm did not marry anyone; this 'marriage' was a ploy of the Lord so that his cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita could join hands with him to successfully accomplish the divine mandate for which the Lord had to come down to earth as a human prince whom the ignorant world recognised as 'Sri Ram'.

The world, in its utter ignorance, thought that the Supreme Being has 'married', and that 'his wife' is Sita, and that she was 'abducted by the demon king', and that Lord Ram 'grieved for her and had to wage a bloody war to free her from the clutches of the demons'. All this is a play of the Lord's Maya or his power to create delusions.

This 'ring' stands for this 'circle of delusions' that the Lord voluntarily created around himself so that his truth and reality remains hidden. It was not hidden from the great sages, seers and even those who were blessed devotees of the Lord as is absolutely clear from many instances where they had shown clear knowledge of who Lord Ram was. Examples are sage Vasistha^a, sage Vishwamitra^b, sage Sutikshan^c, sage Agastya^d,

sage Bharadwaj^c, Ahilya^f who was freed from her cursed body of a stone and resumed her original form as wife of sage Gautam, Sabari^g who had waited for long years to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram and achieve salvation, and so on.

{References: ^aRam Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.

^bRam Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 206; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 209.

^cRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12.

^dRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 13.

^eRam Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.

^fRam Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211.

^gRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.}

A deluded person's mind is a 'captive mind', a mind that can't think freely and intelligently to correctly arrive at the truth after diligent analysis and thought. This phenomenon is metaphorically depicted in these lines by saying that "the mind of those who beheld Lord Ram's ring was captivated by its charm and beauty". Yes it is the 'charm and beauty' of the power of Lord's Maya that it ensnares even the gods who were watching the proceedings. Say, did the gods not know who Lord Ram and Sita were, and if they knew then there should have been no cause for these gods to be enchanted by the physical beauty of Lord Ram. Did they not know that the virtue of 'beauty and charm' itself was powered by the Lord's wish; did they not know that all the artificial things of this world, such as this gem-studded marriage ring, had no attraction for the Lord of creation, and that the Supreme Lord does not 'marry and wear a marriage ring'? Therefore, there was no cause to be charmed by this ring. It was a snare that trapped the ignorant mind of the beholder.]

सोहत ब्याह साज सब साजे । उर आयत उरभूषन राजे ॥ ६ ॥

sōhata byāha sāja saba sājē. ura āyata urabhūṣana rājē. 6.

He (Lord Ram) looked most adorable and charming with all the wedding decorations and paraphernalia with which he was adorned¹.

His chest was broad, and it was adorned with wonderful ornaments². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 316.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 243, line no. 1 that says that the Lord wore a garland made of Tulsi leaves, i.e. freshly plucked leaves of the holy Basil plant; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219 says that on his broad chest he wore a garland made of 'Naagmani' which is the solidified sap of the size and shape of a pearl that is found on the hood of a special family of serpents; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 147 that says that he, in his cosmic form as Lord Vishnu, wore the sign of the footprints of sage Bhrigu as well as a magnificent garland of fragrant flowers of a special kind of tree that grows in the forest.]

पिअर उपरना काखासोती । दुहुँ आँचरन्हि लगे मनि मोती ॥ ७ ॥

pi'ara uparanā kākhāsōtī. duhum' ām̐caranhi lagē mani mōtī. 7.

A length of yellow-coloured ceremonial cloth, which had strings of gems and pearls intricately embroidered on its fringes, adorned the upper part of his body. It was slung across his broad chest, with one end passing under his right armpit and the other end hung across his left shoulder. (7)

[Note—Yellow is regarded as an auspicious colour, especially during marriage ceremonies. Hence all the cloth-pieces that Lord Ram wore on this occasion were coloured yellow.]

नयन कमल कल कुंडल काना । बदनु सकल सौंदर्ज निधाना ॥ ८ ॥

nayana kamala kala kuṇḍala kānā. badanu sakala saundarja nidhānā. 8.

His eyes were like lotus flowers¹, and rings hung from his ears².

Taken all in all, the body of Lord Ram was like a treasury of beauty, glamour, magnificence and charm³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 219; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 243; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 316.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 243.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Doha no. 242, line no. 2; (iii) Doha no. 315; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 316.]

सुंदर भृकुटि मनोहर नासा । भाल तिलकु रुचिरता निवासा ॥ ९ ॥

sundara bhr̥kuṭi manōhara nāsā. bhāla tilaku ruciratā nivāsā. 9.

The Lord's eyebrows¹ were charming, and so was his nose². The Tilak mark³ on his forehead appeared to be a treasury of loveliness. (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 243.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 that precedes Doha no. 147.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 243.]

सोहत मौरु मनोहर माथे । मंगलमय मुकुता मनि गाथे ॥ १० ॥

sōhata mauru manōhara māthē. maṅgalamaya mukutā mani gāthē. 10.

A tiara studded with precious gems and pearls adorned the ceremonial wedding crown on his (Lord Ram's) head. (10)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chanda line no. 1 that follows herein below.]

छं०. गाथे महामनि मौर मंजुल अंग सब चित चोरहीं । १ ।

chanda.

gāthē mahāmani maura manjula aṅga saba cita cōrahīm. 1.

The enchanting tiara stuck in the ceremonial wedding crown placed on the Lord's head was studded with precious gems.

All the organs of the Lord were so attractive that they captivated the mind and held its undivided attention. (Chanda line no. 1)

[Note—This verse concludes the narration of the physical beauty of Lord Ram as a groom that was commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that followed immediately after Doha no. 326 herein above.]

पुर नारि सुर सुंदरीं बरहि बिलोकि सब तिन तोरहीं ॥ २ ॥

pura nāri sura sundarīm barahi bilōki saba tina tōrahīm. 2.

The women-folk of the city of Janakpur as well as the pretty celestial ladies of the gods watched the glamorous, lovely form of the groom (Lord Ram) and broke blades of grass as a magic formula (or a talisman) that would prevent evil eyes of any kind from harming the Lord. (Chanda line no. 2)

मनि बसन भूषन वारि आरति करहिं मंगल गावहीं । ३ ।

mani basana bhūṣana vāri ārati karahīm maṅgala gāvahīm. 3.

These ladies scattered precious gems around the Lord, and offered ceremonial clothes and ornaments to him as a gesture to show their immense joy and pleasure to see the Lord as a groom, as well as a sign that they are blessing him and offering their respect to him.

After this, they did the ceremonial Aarti of the Lord to honour him and pay their obeisance to him.

[That is, the ladies first expressed their joy by scattering gems etc. before the Lord. This is a social custom that is observed during auspicious and happy events, such

as marriages, as a token of expression of happiness and pleasure. Then they offered clothes and ornaments to the Lord as gifts on the occasion of his marriage. Finally, they did his Aarti, i.e. they waved lighted lamps, arranged on a decorated platter, in front of Lord Ram to honour him and pay their obeisance to him.] (Chanda line no. 3)

सुर सुमन बरिसहिं सूत मागध बंदि सुजसु सुनावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

surā sumana barisahim sūta māgadha bandi sujasu sunāvahīm. 4.

The gods showered flowers from the sky, while the bards, the minstrels and other professional singers sang laudatory songs praising the Lord's glories and those of his royal family. (Chanda line no. 4)

कोहबरहिं आने कुअँर कुअँरि सुआसिनिह सुख पाइ कै । ५ ।
अति प्रीति लौकिक रीति लागीं करन मंगल गाइ कै ॥ ६ ॥

kōhabarahim ānē ku'amṛa ku'amṛi su'āsininha sukha pā'i kai. 5.
ati prīti laukika rīti lāgīm karana maṅgala gā'i kai. 6.

The honourable ladies¹ who had accompanied the prince (Lord Ram) and the princess (Sita), cheerfully brought them to the room where the family deities of the bride's family were placed to be worshipped by the newly-wed couple. [This ritual is known as "kōhabara".]² (Chanda line no. 5)

Once there, they affectionately sang auspicious songs befitting this occasion along side undertaking the various social rites that are associated with this part of the wedding ceremony (that is known as the "kōhabara")*. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is "su'āsininha" which literally means those ladies whose husbands were still alive; the opposite of a widow. During auspicious events, only those women whose husbands were alive were allowed to participate.

²Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326 above; and (b) Janki Mangal, verse no. 146.

An interesting observation can be made at this juncture. Please refer also to the note appended to Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326.

We have read that all the four brothers were married together in the same pavilion. So, when the lady-friends of the four brides escorted the four pairs of couples inside the palace to do the ritual of Kohabar, all of them were together. This fact is clear when we read Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326. But when they reached the spot, the actual worship of the family deities was done by the four couples separately.

*Tulsidas had paused his narration of the events associated with the marriage in Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326, and had started describing the physical beauty of the Lord's divine form through the fish-eye lens of Sita—refer: Doha no. 326 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.

Now, when there was a loud chorus of applause and cheering by the crowd of exuberant gods in the sky and the people on the ground, Tulsidas suddenly woke up from his day-dreaming in which he was lost while describing the Lord's beauty to pick up the

threads of his narration and resume it once again from these verses, Chanda line no. 5 that describes the ritual of Kohabar that was kept in pause mode earlier.]

लहकौरि गौरि सिखाव रामहि सीय सन सारद कहैं । ७ ।

lahakauri gauri sikhāva rāmaḥi sīya sana sārada kahair̥. 7.

During the next ritual known as “Lahakouri”¹, goddess Gauri (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) herself taught Lord Ram what to do, and likewise Sita was advised by Sarada (the goddess of knowledge and divine consort of Brahma, the creator). (Chanda line no. 7)

[Note—¹“Lahakouri” is a ritual when the bride and the groom feed sweets to each other by putting the morsels directly in each other’s mouth. This rite is observed to break the wall of shyness and formality between the groom and the bride, and to enable them to overcome inhibitions of all kinds. The lady-friends of the bride poke jokes and tease the couple amid an informal environment of bonhomie and laughter.

Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 149.]

रनिवासु हास बिलास रस बस जन्म को फलु सब लहैं ॥ ८ ॥

ranivāsu hāsa bilāsa rasa basa janma kō phalu saba lahair̥. 8.

The entire part of the palace where the female members of the royal household lived (known as “ranivāsa”; technically the ‘royal gynaeceum’) was brimming over with enthusiasm and merriment as all its members thoroughly enjoyed the celebrations that accompanied the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram. Everyone said that their birth and life have been fully rewarded and has been worthwhile as they had been able to witness this glorious moment first hand and enjoy it fully. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—We have read previously that the women-folk of Janakpur had very eagerly wanted that Lord Ram should marry Sita and thereby establish a permanent bond or relationship with this city and its inhabitants so that all of them would get more chances to see and interact with the Lord in future when he comes to pay an occasional visit to his in-law’s place. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223.]

निज पानि मनि महुँ देखिअति मूरति सुरूपनिधान की । ९ ।

चालति न भुजबल्ली बिलोकनि बिरह भय बस जानकी ॥ १० ॥

nija pāni mani mahum̐ dēkhi'ati mūrati surūpanidhāna kī. 9.

cālāti na bhujaballī bilōkani biraha bhaya basa jānakī. 10.

Sita saw the enchanting image of her beloved Lord being reflected in the gems and other precious stones on the ornaments that she wore on her hands (finger-rings, bangles, bracelets, armlets etc.). (Chanda line no. 9)

She did not move her hands even slightly and it appeared that they were made of wood (i.e. she was completely immobilised) for fear of losing the chance of uninterruptedly seeing the beautiful images of the Lord that were reflected from the gems she wore on her hands if these images got disrupted when the hand was moved. (Chanda line no. 10)

[Note—Sita was shy to look at her beloved Lord Ram directly in the presence of so many of her friends. So she watched Lord Ram's images as they got reflected from the gems and precious stones studded on the ornaments she wore on her hands. Even a slight movement of the hand would change the angle of reflection and disrupt the image. She was so enthralled and captivated that she became rigid and her hands become immobile like logs of wood—"Bhuj-balli".

The same idea is expressed in Doha no. 326 herein above, as well as earlier when Sita had been so immobilised out of shyness that she could not raise her hands to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram after the bow was broken—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 264.

The situation has become piquant now: The ritual of "Lahakouri" is being done when the bride and the groom feed sweets to each other personally by directly using their hands and fingers, instead of a spoon, to put morsels of it into the mouth of their partner (refer: Chanda line no. 7 herein above). But Sita is so immobilised that she refuses to move her hand and put sweets into the mouth of Lord Ram. Sita was extremely shy to look up and see Lord Ram directly in the face which would be necessary if she was to feed him as required during the ritual of Lahakouri. But at the same time she wanted to see the beautiful and charming face of her beloved Lord without losing a moment's chance. Trapped in this dilemma, she decided to see Lord Ram's image as it was reflected from the many ornaments she was wearing on her hands—such as the finger rings, the bangles, the bracelets and the armlets. She kept her eyes riveted on them, giving the impression that her hands had become as rigid as a log of wood.]

कौतुक बिनोद प्रमोदु प्रेमु न जाइ कहि जानहिं अलीं । ११ ।

kautuka binōda pramōdu prēmu na jā'i kahi jānahiṁ alīṁ. 11.

The atmosphere of joyous celebrations and gaiety, of mirth and rejoicing, of euphoria and exhilaration, of happiness and gladness exceedingly, that prevailed everywhere at that time is beyond narration (even as it is beyond imagination). Only the friends of the brides who were present on that occasion could know it (because they witnessed it and enjoyed it). (Chanda line no. 11)

बर कुअँरि सुंदर सकल सखीं लवाइ जनवासेहि चलीं ॥ १२ ॥

bara ku'amṛi sundara sakala sakhīṁ lavā'i janavāsēhi calīṁ. 12.

After the rituals were over, the female friends cheerfully escorted the wonderful pairs of the grooms and their brides to the palace where the groom's marriage party headed by king Dasrath was lodged. (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—King Dasrath had already left the venue of the marriage functions and gone to his residence as narrated herein above in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 326.

The grooms and their brides were then led inside the palace of king Janak where the two rituals of Kohabar and Lahakouri were undertaken as described in Chanda line nos. 5 and 7 above.

Having finished with all the rituals, the ladies now escorted the four couples to the place where the guests from Ayodhya, i.e. the grooms' marriage party, were lodged.]

तेहि समय सुनिअ असीस जहँ तहँ नगर नभ आनँदु महा । १३ ।
चिरु जिअहुँ जोरीं चारु चार्यो मुदित मन सबहीं कहा ॥ १४ ॥

tēhi samaya suni'a asīsa jaham̐ taham̐ nagara nabha ānam̐du mahā. 13.
ciru ji'ahum̐ jōrīm̐ cāru cāryō mudita mana sabahīm̐ kahā. 14.

At that time, loud exclamations of profuse blessings (from elders, Brahmins, gods etc.) could be heard from all the directions even as there was great exultation and euphoria both in the city of Janakpur as well as in the sky (i.e. the heaven from where the gods were watching the proceedings). (Chanda line no. 13)

Everyone present on that auspicious occasion whole-heartedly blessed the four couples, saying affectionately: 'Let the four pairs live a long and happy life'. (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—The four pairs of brides and grooms were heading for the place where king Dasrath and the rest of the marriage party was lodged. The royal procession with the four newly-wed couples passed through the streets of the city, wending its way slowly, majestically, with all the royal grandeur and fanfare, from the palace of king Janak to the palace where king Dasrath was staying. The exuberant rejoicings, the loud applause and profuse blessings pouring in from all the sides came from the citizens who had lined on both sides of the street to cheer at the four royal couples as they proceeded in a procession towards the place where the marriage party was lodged. The gods, however, cheered from the sky.]

जोगींद्र सिद्ध मुनीस देव बिलोकि प्रभु दुंदुभि हनी । १५ ।
चले हरषि बरषि प्रसून निज निज लोक जय जय जय भनी ॥ १६ ॥

jōgīndra sid'dha munīsa dēva bilōki prabhu dundubhi hanī. 15.
calē haraṣi baraṣi prasūna nija nija lōka jaya jaya bhanī. 16.

When the great ascetics, the mystics, the sages and the gods saw Lord Ram dressed as a groom, they were ecstatic with joy and delight. The kettle-drums were played enthusiastically by them to celebrate this divine sight and the auspicious occasion. (15)

After that (i.e. when the marriage ceremonies were over and the four couples had reached the palace where king Dasrath waited for their arrival), all of them (i.e. the ascetics, the mystics, the sages and the gods) showered flowers (for the last time) and departed from there to go back to the respective places from where they had come to witness and participate in this wedding ceremony. Before finally departing for their respective destinations¹, they erupted in a thunderous applause of praise and honour for

all the four couples, cheering them and exclaiming delightedly, 'Hail, Hail; Glory to you all. You all be blessed!' (Chanda line no. 16)

[Note—¹The ascetics, mystics and sages had come from their far-flung hermitages spread in all the corners of the world to attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram. How did they come to know of this event? Well, the answer is this—when Lord Shiva's bow broke, there was a thunderous roar, the earth shook, and the sound of the breaking of the bow along with the shudder of the earth rumbled across its surface to reach its farthest corners. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262.

The sages, hermits and ascetics realized that Shiva's bow had been broken, and they also realized that this indicated that Lord Vishnu had fulfilled his promise made to the gods and mother earth on some earlier occasion that he will come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

So this was an ideal opportunity for them to have a divine glimpse of their Lord and get the reward of being born as a human being. They felt that this rare opportunity won't come again in their lives and so all of them came to attend the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, alone and in groups.

Having witnessed the holy events and partaking of this divine nectar-like sight of watching the Supreme Lord up so close, they showered flowers upon him, blessed him and then retired back to their hermitages and forests to continue with their spiritual endeavours.]

दो०. सहित बधूटिन्ह कुअँर सब तब आए पितु पास ।
सोभा मंगल मोद भरि उमगेउ जनु जनवास ॥ ३२७ ॥

dōhā.

sahita badhūṭinha ku'amra saba taba ā'e pitu pāsa.
sōbhā maṅgala mōda bhari umagē'u janu janavāsa. 327.

Then all the four princes, the grooms, came to their father along with their respective brides. It appeared at that time that the entire place of residence of the marriage party overflowed with waves of joy, delight, euphoria and happiness. (Doha no. 327)

[Note—This Doha concludes the narration of the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram with Sita with its customary rituals that commenced with the sending of an invitation to king Dasrath by Janak to come to the marriage venue with the groom, Lord Ram, and the subsequent events that followed, as narrated from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313 onwards.]

चौ०. पुनि जेवनार भई बहु भाँती । पठए जनक बोलाइ बराती ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

puni jēvanāra bhaṭī bahu bhāmṭī. paṭha'ē janaka bōlā'i barātī. 1.

Then an elaborate marriage banquet (the post-wedding feast) was organised in which a wide variety of delectable dishes of all imaginable types were served. King Janak invited all the members of the groom's party to come to this feast. (1)

[Note—The type of food served and the elaborate arrangements for this feast are described below from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 328—to Doha no. 329.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 159.]

परत पाँवड़े बसन अनूपा । सुतन्ह समेत गवन कियो भूपा ॥ २ ॥

parata pāmvaṛē basana anūpā. sutanha samēta gavana kiyō bhūpā. 2.

Carpets made of exquisite materials were spread all along the way as king Dasrath left his place of residence with his four sons (to participate in this banquet). (2)

[Note—These carpets were spread as a warm and affectionate gesture to welcome the king and his sons as well as the rest of the marriage party to the grand feast.

Earlier also we read that such carpets were spread on two special occasions—

(i) one was when Lord Ram had come to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be done—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 319;

and (ii) once again when Dasrath had come to attend the marriage ceremony such carpets were spread for him and his retinue—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 320.]

सादर सब के पाय पखारे । जथाजोगु पीढ़न्ह बैठारे ॥ ३ ॥

sādara saba kē pāya pakhārē. jathājōgu pīrhanha baiṭhārē. 3.

Janak courteously washed the feet of everyone as a gesture of showing warm welcome as well as respect for them¹. He then escorted the guests to their respective seats that were arranged for them in accordance to their position and status in the royal and social hierarchy². (3)

[Note—¹It should be noted that this verse telling us that Janak washed the feet of the guests refers to the all the members of the marriage party except king Dasrath whose feet Janak washes in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below.

However, we must note here that broadly speaking, the same procedure of showing respect to the guests was followed when king Dasrath and the rest of the groom's party had arrived at the wedding pavilion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 321.

²The seating arrangement was strictly according to royal protocol and in line with the prevalent norms of the society. For instance, all the close relatives of the grooms were given central seats that were specially marked for the members of the royal family, then there were seats especially ear-marked for the guest sages and seers, then there were seats for the senior ministers, commanders of the army, the royal attendants in accordance to their position in the royal hierarchy, and so on and so forth.]

धोए जनक अवधपति चरना । सीलु सनेहु जाइ नहिं बरना ॥ ४ ॥

dhō'ē janaka avadhapati caranā. sīlu sanēhu jā'i nahim baranā. 4.

*Janak respectfully washed the feet of Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya. It is not possible to narrate how affectionately and courteously Janak did it.

[*We can read this verse as follows also—“When Janak washed the feet of the king of Ayodhya (i.e. Dasrath, who was now related to him by the virtue of the marriage of his four daughters with the latter’s four sons), he did it so affectionately and showed so much courtesy that it is not possible to either measure his happiness and joy, or to describe their intensity in words. (4)

[Note—Janak had shown great and special affection and respect for Dasrath when he washed the latter’s feet. The way Janak washed Dasrath’s feet was different from the way the feet of others were washed by him. Whereas the feet of the other members of the marriage party were washed merely as a custom of the society and a polite expression of welcome, the situation was different when the turn of Dasrath came. Janak and Dasrath were now equal in terms of stature by the virtue of the marriage of all the four princesses of Janakpur with all the four princes of Ayodhya. The two kings now shared a bond of family relationship that has been forged as a result of this marriage. Now onwards, they were like brothers, and not merely friendly kings.

Janak regarded Dasrath as the more fortunate king of the two of them because the Lord of the creation has come down on earth to become his son in the form of Lord Ram. Besides this, Dasrath would now enjoy the company of the Lord as well as his divine Shakti in the form of Sita, a luck that Janak could not get.

Then again, Janak recalled how he was enthralled by the enchanting view of the divine form of Lord Ram when he had first seen him at the time of welcoming sage Vishwamitra (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216). He mused over the fact that Dasrath had the rare opportunity of interacting with the Lord at all times of the day, and as much as he wished, because the Lord was his son and he lived in close proximity of his father. So, Janak reveled at the joy king Dasrath derived everyday of his life and every moment of that day—Janak wondered how lucky and blessed Dasrath was!

That is why when Janak washed Dasrath’s feet, he had done it with the greatest of respect and reverence as if he was washing the holy feet of a great soul—because Dasrath was not an ordinary king, but the most fortunate one in the entire human race as to have the Supreme Being as his son with whom he could play when the Lord was a child, and with whom he could share close moments of love and affection that naturally exists between a doting father and his loving son. Say, who else had this lovely opportunity and rare privilege!]

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 320.]

बहुरि राम पद पंकज धोए । जे हर हृदय कमल महुँ गोए ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri rāma pada pañkaja dhō'ē. jē hara hṛdaya kamala mahum̐ gō'ē. 5.

Then, Janak washed the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram that are enshrined in the lotus-like heart of Lord Shiva. (5)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 318; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 along with Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 324, especially Chanda line no. 3 of this set of Chanda-verses which specifically refers to Lord Shiva and Lord Ram's holy feet being enshrined in his heart.]

तीनिउ भाइ राम सम जानी । धोए चरन जनक निज पानी ॥ ६ ॥

tīni'u bhā'i rāma sama jānī. dhō'ē carana janaka nija pānī. 6.

Janak then washed the feet of all the other three brothers of Lord Ram (i.e. of Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) with the same affection as he had washed the feet of the Lord himself because he treated all the three brothers alike and with the same affection and respect with which he had treated Lord Ram. (6)

[Note—It has been said earlier that when the three brothers were married, the same procedure that was followed for the wedding of Lord Ram and Sita was also followed for them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

This shows that Janak treated all the four sons-in-law equally.]

आसन उचित सबहि नृप दीन्हे । बोलि सूपकारी सब लीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥

āsana ucita sabahi nrpa dīnhē. bōli sūpakārī saba līnhē. 7.

The king (Janak) gave everyone an appropriate seat to sit upon. [“Appropriate” in the sense that everyone was seated according to his rank, position, status and standing in the social and royal hierarchy.]

Then he called all the servers to come and start serving meal to the guests. [These servers were the many attendants, the table-hands, the waiters etc. who would serve the guests and wait on them, and the cooks to take specialized orders and serve food according to the taste of the individual.] (7)

सादर लगे परन पनवारे । कनक कील मनि पान सँवारे ॥ ८ ॥

sādara lagē parana panavārē. kanaka kīla mani pāna saṁvārē. 8.

As soon as the orders were issued to start the service, all the attendants and servers started laying plates before the guests. These plates were made of leaves studded with precious gems and stitched together with golden pins.

[The plates themselves were made from broad leaves of the plantain plant which are universally used as plates to serve food to guests. These leaves were stitched together with pins made of gold, and were decorated with gems.] (8)

दो०. सूपोदन सुरभी सरपि सुंदर स्वादु पुनीत ।
छन महँ सब कें परुसि गे चतुर सुआर बिनीत ॥ ३२८ ॥

dōhā.

sūpōdana surabhī sarapi sundara svādu punīta.
chana mahum̐ saba kēm̐ parusi gē catura su'āra binīta. 328.

Veteran cooks and servers who were experts and skilled in their respective fields quickly went around, politely serving the guests with food consisting of boiled rice, spiced curry made from pulses of varying kinds, and topped-up with dollops of clarified butter made from pure cow's milk. The food served was very delicious and prepared hygienically with the highest standards of purity in mind. The service was very efficient because it was done in a very short time. [None of the guests had to wait for food to be served, and as soon as the signal was given by Janak, the efficient servers served all the guests in a jiffy.] (Doha no. 328)

चौ०. पंच कवल करि जेवन लागे । गारि गान सुनि अति अनुरागे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

pañca kavala kari jēvana lāgē. gāri gāna suni ati anurāgē. 1.

The guests offered the first five morsels of food as symbolic offerings to the five vital winds known as the 'Panch Pran' that live inside the body and keep it alive¹, and then they commenced to eat and relish the delectable meal.

Meanwhile, songs having lyrics of good-intentioned and good-humoured teasing (banter; jokes) were being sung to entertain the guests, and all of them enjoyed the songs as they continued eating². (1)

[Note—¹The "Panch Prans" are the five vital winds that support life inside the body of the living being. Without these five winds, no creature can survive. These winds are regarded as subtle forms of Brahm, the Supreme Being who lives inside the body of the creature and controls all his functioning from within. These five winds control different functions of the body as briefly outlined below. If any of the five vital winds withdraw or refuse to carry on its duty, the body of the creature suffers to that extent. Hence, from the metaphysical point of view, the first five offerings of food are symbolically offered to these five vital winds so that they keep the 'fire of life' burning inside the body of the creature.

This is the proper and holistic way of eating food. When food is eaten with the idea that it is meant to support the body and keep it fully nourished, health, productive and active, it leads to all-round growth, prosperity and welfare of the creature. Otherwise, if the food is eaten to gratify the natural urges of the different gross organs of the body—such as the desire for tasty food to appease the tongue, food that is attractive to look at and is appealing for the organ of sight which is the eye, food that is nice to touch so that

it gratifies the sense of touch residing in the skin, and enticing for the sense of smell that lives in the nose—then the same body becomes diseased and unable to cope with the stress and strain of existence.

This approach, this attitude of eating food as an offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body which is a symbolic abode of Brahm at the micro level of creation gives eating a holistic dimension, and prevents this basic requirement of life from degenerating into glutinous gorging of junk food that would ultimately douse the fire inside the body and snuff out life from it. This would obviously lead to ill-health, lack of vitality and stamina in the body, which would in turn make life a burden for the creature.

According to the philosophy of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads, the body of the creature is like a sacred fire-pit of the sacrificial fire. Just like oblations are offered to the sacred fire during the ritual of doing a fire sacrifice with the idea that these oblations are accepted by the Fire God on behalf of all other Gods who control and preside over this creation, the first five morsels of food eaten are symbolic offerings to the fire burning inside the gross body of the creature so that the food is ‘burnt’ (digested) and its essential elements offered to the gods who live in the body of the creature in a subtle form known as the ‘five vital winds’, the “Panch Prans”. This philosophy envisions that the individual body of the living being is a microcosm of the entire creation when it is considered at the macrocosmic level.

If the sacred fire burning inside the body is kept alive and healthy with the patron gods who too live inside the body pleased and contented, the creature can lead a productive, happy and healthy life just like the case of the oblations made to the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice that keeps the gods in the heaven pleased and remain benevolent upon the creatures of this world, thereby ensuring all-round happiness and well-being for all in the world.

Now, let us see what this ‘five vital winds’ are, and what are their chief functions. This will help us to understand why it is so important to keep the five vital winds healthy and active by eating properly.

Dictionary defines ‘Pran’ as breath, inhaled and exhaled wind, the breath of life, life itself, one of the five chief vital winds or airs that sustain life, strength, valour, courage, energy, vitality, vigour. It is also synonymous with the fire element as well as with the supreme soul or Atma. It is the ‘fire element’ because both the fire as well as the Pran inject and infuse life into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body of a creature, enabling it to get up and perform its functions and carry on with its activities. A dead body from which ‘life’ has exited becomes cold and lifeless, thereby indicating that the fire element that is inherently present in it has been extinguished—we then declare that the man is dead.

The word *Pran* literally means the life of all living beings, so called because the Pran injects life and consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body of the organism. It is the vital life-consciousness present in the body of an individual creature. It is represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive, and distinguishes a living body from a dead one. The word ‘Pran’ is usually associated with the vital winds of the body as it is these winds that keep the body active and alive. The Pran is sometimes used synonymously with the Atma or soul of the creature because both are equally important for a creature’s existence. Whereas Pran is a synonym of life and vitality, Atma stands for the consciousness present in the body. Hence both are like the two sides of the same coin called the living being.

Though technically Atma or soul is pure consciousness while Pran is a vital wind or air element, practically they are synonymous with each other. An illustration will clear this point. Suppose a man has lost senses in his limbs—they have been paralysed, or he is lying unconsciousness due to some serious disease. We regard such a man as alive and

not as dead as long as he continues to breathe, and as long as he breathes, or as long as he is technically 'alive' his Atma is deemed to be inside his body, because the true identity or the true self of a man is not his physical body but his Atma. Therefore we do not regard the 'unconscious' body as dead. But when he actually dies, that is, when he stops to breathe, we say that 'his Pran' has left the body, and that 'he' has died. Now, who has died? It is the person whose Pran has left the body; and the person is the 'self' or the Atma which has left the body when the Pran made its exit from it at the time of death. This is because Pran and Atma depend on each other so much so that as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the Atma also leaves the body and we say that the person is no more. Why do we say that the 'person is no more' when the body is actually lying in front of us? It is because the 'person' is the Atma and not the body, and this Atma has left the body with the Pran at the time of death. When the proper time comes, the Atma leaves the body astride the Pran, riding piggy back on it.

The five main vital winds are Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samaana. Amongst them, the Pran refers to the breath which injects the vital spark of life in a body to keep it alive and active, thereby providing it with the necessary impetus, the energy, vitality and strength to perform its designated functions and duties as a living entity. All the other vital winds are of any relevance and significance only as long as there is Pran in the body for the simple reason that if the body stops breathing it would die, and the dead body has neither the need for the other winds nor are they competent enough to keep it alive relying on their own strength. At the same time, all these vital winds are collectively called Pran because they work in tandem with each other to enable the main Pran, the breath, to actually carry out its function. These vital winds do not exist in separate so-called water tight compartments, as this is an incredulous proposition because air is an element that cannot be compartmentalized into separate entities having distinct existences, but they are named as separate winds just for the academic purpose of studying the way the vital wind or air functions differently in the body to enable it to carry on with its functions. So these other 'Prans' or vital winds besides the breath, both inhaled and exhaled, are the following—Apana, Vyan, Udaana and Samaana.

So we see that the term 'Pran' is usually applied to breath because it is the vital wind force that injects and sustains life and vitality in a creature. It is synonymous with life, Atma and soul of a living creature. The presence of Pran determines whether a creature is dead or alive; it is a distinguishing factor between the animate and inanimate world. Pran is the essential vibrations of life; it is the rhythm of life; it is the essential characteristic that defines life.

The inherent tendency of the Pran, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the Apana winds live in the intestine and pass down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death—this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishad texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal

meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently inclined to, while the 'Apaan' winds pulls it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

The Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2 explicitly asserts that *Pran is a synonym for 'consciousness'*, and therefore for the Atma which is also the pure consciousness residing in the gross body of the living being. Since the cosmic aspect of the 'consciousness' is known as Brahm, Pran is also synonym for Brahm.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse nos. 47/1, 3, 5, 7, 9 assert that the various *vital winds are revelations of Brahm*.

According to *Subala-panishad*, Canto 9, verse no. 1-5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the main five vital winds are the following:--

(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5).

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 3 describes these winds, their locations and functions as follows:--

"Verse no. 13 = The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyaan moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apaana moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udaan is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Samaana is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Samaana wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apaana and the Samaana) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apaana Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apaana wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Samaana wind would take these nutrients to

the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apaana wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apaana wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.

This fire when stoked by the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Samaan wind takes over. In association with the Pran wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Pran wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. It will be noticed here that the Pran wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Pran wind also helps the Apaana wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. The nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.

²Such songs are sung in a light-hearted manner as banter and joke to entertain the guests during marriage functions. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 329 below.]

भाँति अनेक परे पकवाने । सुधा सरिस नहिं जाहिं बखाने ॥ २ ॥

bhāmti anēka parē pakavānē. sudhā sarisa nahim jāhim bakhānē. 2.

Countless and endless varieties of delicious and dainty food items and confectionaries, each as sweet and delectable as ambrosia, and each one of them more lip-smacking and tongue-tickling than the other, were served to the guests. (2)

[Note—The first round of food that was served was essentially meant for offering to the five vital winds as noted in verse no. 1 above. Hence, it consisted of plain boiled rice, curry of pulses, and clarified butter—refer: Doha no. 328 herein above. When these three items are mixed together, they form a thick gruel or pudding-like heap that closely resembles the offerings that are made to the sacred fire during formal fire sacrifices. The

offerings that are made at the fire sacrifice too consist basically of mixed cereals, pulses and clarified butter in addition to milk and curd.

That done, the time came to actually enjoy food and satisfy the taste buds—not to appease them or indulge in them but to celebrate the auspicious occasion and the happy event of the marriage of the four brothers. It is a well established custom in society that a grand feast is organised at the end of a marriage.]

परुसन लगे सुआर सुजाना । बिंजन बिबिध नाम को जाना ॥ ३ ॥

parusana lagē su'āra sujānā. binjana bibidha nāma kō jānā. 3.

Efficient servers and expert cooks began serving the guests with countless varieties of tasteful dishes which were so numerous in number and varied in taste and form that no one knew either their names or their varieties. (3)

चारि भाँति भोजन बिधि गाई । एक एक बिधि बरनि न जाई ॥ ४ ॥
छरस रुचिर बिंजन बहु जाती । एक एक रस अगनित भाँती ॥ ५ ॥

cāri bhām̐ti bhōjana bidhi gā'ī. ēka ēka bidhi barani na jā'ī. 4.
charasa rucira binjana bahu jā'tī. ēka ēka rasa aganita bhām̐ti. 5.

[Elaborating on verse no. 3, we now get a hint of the type of food served in that grand feast.]

Ancient culinary texts describe that there are four chief categories of food¹ that a person can partake of. The food served at the grand banquet had countless varieties of each category of dish so much so that it is not possible to narrate (or list) them. (4)

Similarly, there were numerous dishes of seasoned food prepared in a variety of ways that had all the six types of basic tastes² in different combinations.

In fact, the dishes were so numerous and varied that each single category of food and each single type of taste or flavour was represented in many forms and offered in different combinations. (5)

[Note—¹The four basic categories of food that a living being eats are the following—(i) Bhakshya— भक्ष्य that which is eaten by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, that which requires proper chewing and mastication before it can enter the food pipe, e.g. bread, fruits, vegetables, chewing of sugarcane; (ii) Bhojya— भोज्य that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, requiring least chewing or masticating and can be easily swallowed down the gullet, e.g. rice, curry; (iii) Lehya— लेह्य that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (iv) Choshya— चोष्य that which is sipped or sucked, e.g. water, milk, tea.

The *Garbho-panishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 5 however classifies the four basic types of foods as—(i) Lehya: that which is licked; (ii) Peya: that which is drunk; (iii) Khaadya: that which is chewed or masticated; and (iv) Choshya: that which is sucked.

²The six tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

जेवँत देहिं मधुर धुनि गारी । लै लै नाम पुरुष अरु नारी ॥ ६ ॥
समय सुहावनि गारि बिराजा । हँसत राउ सुनि सहित समाजा ॥ ७ ॥

jēvam̐ta dēhiṁ madhura dhuni gārī. lai lai nāma puruṣa aru nārī. 6.
samaya suhāvani gāri birājā. haṁsata rā'u suni sahita samājā. 7.

*At the time the guests were eating, melodious songs having teasing lyrics that contained light-hearted banter targeting the males and females of the groom's side were sung by the members of the bride's side to lighten-up the atmosphere and induce laughter and mirth.

[*This verse can be read as follows also—"At the time the guests were enjoying their meal, men and women folk of Janakpur, representing the bride's side, sang melodious songs that contained teasing lyrics targeting individual members of the groom's side by their names, as a custom that is observed during marriage feasts to cheer everyone up and induce laughter and mirth so as to lighten up the atmosphere of the otherwise formal event of a grand feast."] (6)

It was a happy occasion and so everyone enjoyed the songs and their taunting lyrics without feeling annoyed or taking offence at the teasing language used. On the contrary, the king (Dasrath) laughed along with other members of his entourage. (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 328 herein above.

Refer also to "Janki Mangal", verse no. 160.]

एहि बिधि सबहीं भोजनु कीन्हा । आदर सहित आचमनु दीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi sabahīṁ bhōjanu kīnhā. ādara sahita ācamanu dīnhā. 8.

On this wise, everyone ate his meal in a cheerful and pleasant environment marked with abundance of joy, mirth and rejoicing. Then everyone was offered water to wash (rinse) their mouths. (8)

[Note—It is customary for the host to offer water from a jug to all his guests after the meal is over so that they can wash their hands and rinse their mouths. Janak himself helped Dasrath and his close family members to clean their hands and mouths, while Janak's chief ministers and courtiers attended other members of the marriage party.]

दो०. देइ पान पूजे जनक दसरथु सहित समाज ।
जनवासेहि गवने मुदित सकल भूप सिरताज ॥ ३२९ ॥

dōhā.

dē'i pāna pūjē janaka dasarathu sahita samāja.
janavāsēhi gavanē mudita sakala bhūpa siratāja. 329.

Then, Janak first offered betel leaves as mouth freshner to king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party, and then paid his obeisance to them.

After that, the chief amongst kings, i.e. king Dasrath, proceeded cheerfully to the place where he and other members of the marriage party had been lodged¹. (Doha no. 329)

[Note—This Doha concludes the narration of the reception and feast hosted by Janak for the marriage party which commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 328.

¹Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 20.]

चौ०. नित नूतन मंगल पुर माहीं । निमिष सरिस दिन जामिनि जाहीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nita nūtana maṅgala pura māhīm. nimiṣa sarisa dina jāmini jāhīm. 1.

[The groom's party stayed in Janakpur for many more days after the wedding was over. The following verses describe the joy and merriment that pervaded the atmosphere of the city during those days.]

Everyday there was renewed celebration and festivity in the city of Janakpur. Time passed unnoticed as if days and nights were like moments. [That is, many days passed after the end of the wedding ceremony and its accompanying feast, but no one was bothered about time and the number of days the marriage party stayed in Janakpur after that.]¹ (1)

[Note—¹Happy days pass too fast and no one notices them flying away because of their excitement and happiness as compared to bad days that seem like burden. A similar idea is expressed earlier when the birth of Lord Ram and his brothers is being narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 which say that “the insects were confused because there was continuous daylight as the month was reduced to a single day, and the Sun God was stunned that though his chariot continued to move in the sky yet there was no night in Ayodhya”.

In other words, everybody thoroughly enjoyed the presence of king Dasrath and his royal retinue in Janakpur. No one wanted them to go away, and this will be clear when we read Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 332 below.]

बड़े भोर भूपतिमनि जागे । जाचक गुन गन गावन लागे ॥ २ ॥

baṛē bhōra bhūpatimani jāgē. jācaka guna gana gāvana lāgē. 2.

The king, who was like a gem in the community of kings (i.e. Dasrath), woke up very early the next morning (i.e. the morning that followed the grand feast). Minstrels and alms-seekers began singing his glories in a loud chorus. (2)

[Note—This and other verses that follow below describe the events of the day following the marriage feast.]

देखि कुअँर बर बधुन्ह समेता । किमि कहि जात मोदु मन जेता ॥ ३ ॥

dēkhi ku'amra bara badhunha samētā. kimi kahi jāta mōdu mana jētā. 3.

Who can describe the extent of happiness and joy that prevailed in his (Dasrath's) heart when he watched the grooms with their respective brides? [That is, no one can describe how happy and glad Dasrath felt watching his sons with their lovely brides. Like any father, it was the culmination of his desires and fruition of his dreams.] (3)

[Note—The reason why Dasrath woke up very early the next morning is that he was exceptionally happy and excited, and so probably could not sleep the previous night. So, he woke up early.

Besides this aspect of his being happy and excited at the marriage of all his four sons and they getting pretty brides fully in accordance to their expectations, it was also a habit of Dasrath that he woke up early as ordained by the scriptures. He woke up before sunrise. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 37 along Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

प्रातक्रिया करि गे गुरु पाहीं । महाप्रमोदु प्रेमु मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

prātakriyā kari gē guru pāhīm. mahāpramōdu prēmu mana māhīm. 4.

The king finished his morning routine (praying, bathing etc.) and went to meet his Guru (sage Vasistha). His heart and mind (together called the “Mana”) were full of bliss and ecstasy. (4)

[Note—We find that on other occasions also, Dasrath had gone to meet his Guru to make special requests to him:--

(i) The first was when he was worried that he was growing old and still had no heirs—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 181.

(ii) The second occasion was when the news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita arrived from Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 293.

(iii) The third occasion was when Dasrath wished to anoint Lord Ram as the regent of the kingdom of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 2.

However, presently he has gone to meet Vasistha to say thanks to him and request him to call all the elders and Brahmins so that gifts can be given to them and charities can be made as is clear in the following verses.]

करि प्रनामु पूजा कर जोरी । बोले गिरा अमिअँ जनु बोरी ॥ ५ ॥

kari pranāmu pūjā kara jōrī. bōlē girā ami'am' janu bōrī. 5.

The king reverentially bowed his head before his Guru (Vasistha) and duly worshipped him. Then he spoke so sweetly that his words appeared to be soaked in nectar. (5)

[Note—This was a very happy day of Dasrath's life, and so he was exceptionally cheerful. This is why he "spoke so sweetly as if his words were soaked in nectar".]

तुहरी कृपाँ सुनहु मुनिराजा । भयउँ आजु मैं पूरनकाजा ॥ ६ ॥
अब सब बिप्र बोलाइ गोसाईं । देहु धेनु सब भाँति बनाई ॥ ७ ॥

tumharī kṛpām' sunahu munirājā. bhaya'um' āju mair' pūranakājā. 6.
aba saba bipra bōlā'i gōsā'ir'. dēhu dhēnu saba bhām'ti banā'ir'. 7.

The king said—'Oh the king amongst great sage! It is due to your grace, benevolence and kindness that all my wishes have been fulfilled and I feel fully contented today. (6)

Now oh Lord, please oblige me by summoning all the Brahmins and elders ("Vipra"), and gift all of them cows that are fully decorated.¹ (7)

[Note—¹Decorating the cows meant decorating them with costly clothes, putting garlands made of precious gems and pearls around their necks, and adorning their horns and hooves with plated gold or silver.]

सुनि गुर करि महिपाल बड़ाई । पुनि पठए मुनि बृंद बोलाई ॥ ८ ॥

sunī gura kari mahipāla baṛā'ī. puni paṭha'ē muni bṛnda bōlā'ī. 8.

When the Guru heard this request from the king, he first praised him (for his courteousness and sweet words, and also for his charitable nature because he wished to make donations). Then he (Guru Vasistha) sent for (invited) all the elders and Brahmins. (8)

[Note—We have read earlier that when Dasrath had gone to convey the good news of Lord Ram's marriage to sage Vasistha, the sage had praised the king then also, giving reasons for his praises—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294.]

दो०. बामदेउ अरु देवरिषि बालमीकि जाबालि ।
आए मुनिबर निकर तब कौसिकादि तपसालि ॥ ३३० ॥

dōhā.

bāmadē'u aru dēvariṣi bālamīki jābāli.
ā'ē munibara nikara taba kausikādi tapasāli. 330.

Sage Vamdeo, the celestial sage Narad, sage Valmiki and sage Jabal, as also sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) who was endowed with a divine halo that comes with extensive

Tapa (doing severe penances and observance of strict austerities)—all of them came there cheerfully (to accept gifts to mark the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita). (Doha no. 330)

[Note—Sages Vaamdeo etc. were present in Janakpur on the occasion of Lord Ram's marriage as is evident in Baal Kand, Doha no. 320 and its preceding Chanda line no. 4 herein above where it is said that at the time of the start of the wedding rites, king Janak had offered his worship to sages Kaushik (Vishwamitra), Vaamdeo etc.

Another important point to note here is that though king Dasrath had requested Vasistha to call 'Vipras', meaning Brahmins and elders of the society, but Vasistha called in 'great sages', and the wonder is that they did not hesitate in coming and accepting gifts. This is because this was not an ordinary marriage, and the gift was not from someone ordinary to celebrate something routine.

It was the marriage that marked the union of the visible form of the supreme Lord of the world in the form of Lord Ram with his cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita. It was a cosmic union of two great forces of creation that was played out at the micro level of creation in the form of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita. So these great sages named above had no compunctions or reservations in coming and accepting gifts. It is a matter of honour and privilege when a person is invited to accept gifts from someone who occupies a very high stature in the society. Even in today's world people vie with each other to get themselves photographed with the high and the mighty, and if an invitation to attend some state function where dignitaries are present is received by someone he would frame it and hang it on his wall to show others how special he is, and thus boast of his newly discovered stature in society.

Vasistha decided to call these sages because he wisely thought that they must be given the honour to accept gifts to mark the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's marriage. On the other hand, if they had not been invited, perhaps they could have felt neglected, let-down or even insulted.

Another reason for calling them was they would bless king Dasrath, and their blessings would stand in good stead for the king and his four sons as well as the kingdom of Ayodhya. This is exactly what happened—we shall read below that all the invited sages have profusely blessed king Dasrath and he would consider himself very fortunate—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 331 below.

And what about the Brahmins and other alms-seekers; did they not come? Yes, they also came—it will be clear below in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 331.]

चौ०. दंड प्रनाम सबहि नृप कीन्हे । पूजि सप्रेम बरासन दीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

daṇḍa pranāma sabahi nṛpa kīnhē. pūji saprēma barāsana dīnhē. 1.

When they (i.e. the invited sages as well as Brahmins) arrived, the king (Dasrath) paid his obeisance to all of them by prostrating before them on the ground. Then he worshipped them and excellent seats to sit. (1)

[Note—Prostrating before sages and elders is the best way of showing respect to them. Another alternative method of equal importance is bowing before them and putting one's head on their feet. But the latter method suits when there are one, two or more sages and

Brahmins of a limited number when a person can attend to each of them. But when there are a large number of such elders then the best option is to prostrate before all of them from a distance as they approach as a group. In the latter case, there would be no need for individually touching each sage's feet or bowing before him.

Prostrating before a group of sages and Brahmins also ensures that all the members of the group are shown equal respect and honour irrespective of the fact that the person showing such respect may not know the individual members of the group personally. Since the sages and Brahmins had similar external appearances, it was often difficult to distinguish one from the other unless one had the chance to look them up closely, or was well acquainted with a person because of frequent interaction with him, or when someone tells him who the guest was.

So, Dasrath took no chances and prostrated before the entire group of sages, Brahmins and other elders who came to him to accept gifts commemorating the auspicious marriage of Lord Ram and his other brothers.]

चारि लच्छ बर धेनु मगाई । कामसुरभि सम सील सुहाई ॥ २ ॥
सब बिधि सकल अलंकृत कीन्हीं । मुदित महिष महिदेवन्ह दीन्हीं ॥ ३ ॥

cāri laccha bara dhēnu magā'īm. kāmasurabhi sama sīla suhā'īm. 2.
saba bidhi sakala alaṅkṛta kīnhīm. mudita mahiṣ mahidēvanha dīnhīm. 3.

The king called for four lakh (1 lakh = 1,00,000) excellent cows¹ who were all like the legendary Kamdhenu cow (the all-wish fulfilling cow) in their gentle manners and beauty. (2)

The cows were fully decorated in every possible way², and then the delighted king gave (donated) them cheerfully to the 'Mahi-devas'³ (literally, the 'gods on earth'; meaning the sages as well as the Brahmins). (3)

[Note—¹The cows were excellent in the sense that they were all healthy, of ripe age, gave abundant milk, looked attractive, and could grant wishes if one serves them faithfully. These are the salient characteristics of the Kamdhenu cow.

²Their horns and hooves were either gold or silver plated, garlands of pearls and other precious gems were put around their necks, their backs were draped with exquisitely embroidered garments, and their tails were manicured and scented oiled and decorated with strings of pearls and gems.

³We have read in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 330 above that the king had requested sage Vasistha to call all the 'Vipras', which usually means Brahmins. But Vasistha summoned even the sages listed in Doha no. 330 along with the elderly Brahmins. So the word 'Mahi-Deva' is used here to cover all of them—the sages as well as the Brahmins because all of them are as revered on earth as the gods are in heaven.]

करत बिनय बहु बिधि नरनाहू । लहेउँ आजु जग जीवन लाहू ॥ ४ ॥

karata binaya bahu bidhi naranāhū. lahē'um āju jaga jīvana lāhū. 4.

The great king offered his prayers to them in a variety of ways (i.e. he offered his respects to the invited sages and Brahmins in different ways, repeatedly using different

words and different gestures), and said—‘I have got the reward (fruit) of taking birth and of all the good deeds that I have done in my life.’ (4)

[Note—The king was very humble and overjoyed as he praised his good fortune and the cumulative affect of all his good deeds that he has witnessed such a happy moment in his life today—all his dear sons were married to magnificent brides who belonged to one of the greatest kingdoms on earth, the kingdom of Janakpur that rivals the kingdom of Ayodhya in its riches, prosperity, power, strength and fame. Then the king praised his good luck that he has had the opportunity to pay his respects to such great sages as Vaamdeo, Narad, Valmiki, Jabal and Vishwamitra together at one place, and that too during the marriage of his sons. It was an excellent combination of stars and grace of the gods that had made this possible.

It is a polite way of showing respect to the sages and Brahmins when one says that he is so fortunate and blessed to meet them, to serve them, and to have them as his guest.

The guest sages and Brahmins accept gifts given and honours shown to them, and in their turn they feel obliged to reciprocate this gesture of respect by blessing the host. This is exactly what happens now—they collectively blessed king Dasrath as is clear in the next line no. 5.]

पाइ असीस महीसु अनंदा । लिए बोलि पुनि जाचक बृन्दा ॥ ५ ॥

कनक बसन मनि हय गय स्यंदन । दिए बूझि रुचि रबिकुलनंदन ॥ ६ ॥

pā'i asīsa mahīsu anandā. li'ē bōli puni jācaka br̥ndā. 5.

kanaka basana mani haya gaya syandana. di'ē būjhi ruci rabikulanandana. 6.

The king (“mahīsu”; the lord of the earth)¹ was very delighted and felt exhilarated when he received blessings from them (the invited sages and Brahmins, the “Mahi-Devas”).

Then he summoned other alms-seekers and members of the laity (the “jācaka br̥ndā”) who were waiting for their turn to receive gifts from the king to mark the marriage of his four sons. (5)

The ‘great son of the Solar Race’ (“rabikulanandana”—i.e. king Dasrath) liberally gave them gold, clothes, gems, horses, elephants and chariots according to their desires and needs.² (6)

[Note—¹We must note the careful selection of words by Tulsidas, the author-poet of this classic book. He has addressed the sages and Brahmins with the epithet “Mahi-Devas”, the gods of the earth, and so he used the word “Mahisa”, meaning the lord of the earth, when referring to king Dasrath. A man of high stature such as the great sages and the exalted Brahmins referred to above would accept only if something is given to them by someone of an equally high stature in society. Remember: the sages and Brahmins were not ‘beggars’ or ‘alms-seekers’ who would queue to get anything that is doled out as charity. They were men of high respect and dignity, and were possessed with powers that would never let them face shortage of material things that they would spread their arms for anything. They accepted anything just to honour the wishes of the giver, and not because they needed the thing.

In other words, the ‘giver was the lord of the earth’, and the ‘receiver was the god of earth’—i.e. they were of equal stature.

When a senior person is given something as gift, it is merely as a ‘token’ of respect from the giver. The ‘cow’ was the standard gift that was given to sages and Brahmins in

earlier times. The cow had its practical use also. The sages maintained hermitages where disciples lived, and so was also the case with elderly Brahmins who spent their time studying the scriptures and teaching them to others. This meant that a large number of ‘students’ lived with them, and the cow used to provide milk for their dietary needs, dung that was dried and baked to serve as fuel for the fire, and so on.

These cows were decorated with precious things such as gems and gold in an indirect method to give material wealth to the sages and Brahmins who could sell them off to meet their financial needs.

²When the word had gone out that king Dasrath has summoned Brahmins (the “Vipras”) because he wishes to give gifts to them to mark the marriage of his sons, all those who were expecting some reward on this occasion also collected voluntarily. No one actually needed anything, but it was a moment to rejoice the marriage in the royal household, and therefore accepting and giving gifts would not mean that a person was a beggar or was suffering financially. It is merely a gesture of joy and happiness that one gives gifts and another accepts them whenever there is an occasion to celebrate some great event.

At the time when Lord Ram and his brothers were born in Ayodhya, similar gifts were given liberally, and whatever one got as a gift he immediately gave it to others with a free spirit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.

We also read that at that time, Dasrath had given liberally to alms-seekers whatever they wished—elephants, chariots, horses, gems, cows and diamonds: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196.

Another occasion is when the good news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in Ayodhya. On that occasion the gifts were given to the Brahmins by the queen-mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi together)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

चले पढ़त गावत गुन गाथा । जय जय जय दिनकर कुल नाथा ॥ ७ ॥

calē paṛhata gāvata guna gāthā. jaya jaya jaya dinakara kula nāthā. 7.

After receiving gifts and honours, all of them (the sages, the Brahmins, the alms-seekers etc.) departed cheerfully and fully contented. They left the place singing and praising the glories of the noble king, repeatedly cheering at him and applauding him loudly—‘Glory to the Lord of the Solar Race (“dinakara kula nāthā”).’ (7)

[Note—Similar instances of cheering crowd of gift-recipients are noticed earlier when gifts were given. (i) First, at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 196; and (ii) then at the time of arrival of news of the Lord’s marriage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.]

एहि बिधि राम बिआह उछाहू । सकइ न बरनि सहस मुख जाहू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi rāma bi’āha uchāhū. saka’i na barani sahasa mukha jāhū. 8.

In this way, the festivities and celebrations that accompanied the marriage of Lord Ram were so profound and glorious that they cannot be narrated even by someone who has a thousand mouths to describe them. (8)

[Note—Similar idea is expressed elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 361.

It is a poetic way of highlighting the glorious and divine moments when the Lord of the world, Lord Ram, got united with the cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita in a ceremony that the mundane world calls ‘marriage’. It is like saying that words fall short of expectations, they are insufficient and incompetent to give even an iota of idea of the extent of happiness and joy, of the dimension of celebrations and festivities, of the intensity of rejoicing and exuberance, of the divine atmosphere and an environment of all-round welfare and well-being that was generated at the time of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita.

Verily, it was an event that can’t be captured in words because the word has its own limitations. The word is like a bird that cannot measure the depth and length of the sky no matter how high and long it flies.]

दो०. बार बार कौसिक चरन सीसु नाइ कह राउ ।

यह सबु सुखु मुनिराज तव कृपा कटाच्छ पसाउ ॥ ३३१ ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra kausika carana sīsu nā'i kaha rā'u.

yaha sabu sukhu munirāja tava kṛpā kaṭāccha pasā'u. 331.

The king was overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness towards sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), and so he repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of the sage and said most humbly, with an immense sense of gratefulness in his voice—‘Oh gracious sage! All this happiness and bliss that I have been fortunate enough to enjoy today are the result of you looking at me with favour, being kind upon me, and are the cumulative result of your blessings, benevolence, mercy and grace that you have shown to me.’ (Doha no. 331)

[Note—The king (Dasrath) felt highly obliged of sage Vishwamitra, and he could not contend himself and sufficiently express his gratitude to the sage because it was he who had been instrumental in getting Lord Ram married to Sita, it was he who brought the Lord to Janakpur and ordered him to break the bow, and it was he who had summoned the king to come and attend the marriage. When the king came, his other sons also accompanied him, and as it turned out all of them got married. The king felt he owed a lot of gratitude to sage Vishwamitra, and so he chose to pay special attention and reverence to the sage in this verse.]

चौ०. जनक सनेहु सीलु करतूती । नृपु सब भाँति सराह बिभूती ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

janaka sanēhu sīlu karatūtī. nṛpu saba bhāmṭi sarāha bibhūtī. 1.

The king (Dasrath) liberally praised his counterpart king Janak for his affectionate and courteous nature, his amiability and friendliness, his gracious deeds and actions, and the overall graceful way he had conducted himself and gone about to complete everything in an efficient and judicious manner. (1)

[Note—Dasrath had witnessed the most dignified and courteous way king Janak had received the members of the marriage party in general and Dasrath himself at the wedding pavilion when they had gone to attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 321.

Janak's courteousness and polite ways are evident once again at the end of the wedding feast as described earlier in Chaupai line no. 8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 326; and in Doha no. 329.]

दिन उठि बिदा अवधपति मागा । राखहिं जनकु सहित अनुरागा ॥ २ ॥

dina uṭhi bidā avadhapati māgā. rākhahim janaku sahita anurāgā. 2.

The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath) got up everyday to request king Janak to give him permission to go back to his kingdom, but the most gracious host (Janak) politely asked him to stay for some more time. (2)

[Note—This showed that Janak was not getting fed-up with serving king Dasrath and the rest of the marriage party. When the host requests the guest to stay for some more time, it shows that the latter is thoroughly enjoying the former's stay. Otherwise, the host would seize on the chance when the guest asks his permission to go, and would immediately accept the request and let the guest leave.

Janak was therefore playing the role of a perfect, graceful and obliging host. Refer Chaupai line no. 5 below.

In the context of the narrative here, from Chaupai line nos. 2—7, the reader can also refer to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse no. 161.]

नित नूतन आदरु अधिकाई । दिन प्रति सहस भँति पहुनाई ॥ ३ ॥

नित नव नगर अनंद उछाहू । दसरथ गवनु सोहाइ न काहू ॥ ४ ॥

nita nūtana ādaru adhikā'ī. dina prati sahasa bhāmṭi pahunā'ī. 3.

nita nava nagara ananda uchāhū. dasaratha gavanu sōhā'i na kāhū. 4.

The royal guest (king Dasrath) was shown newer forms of respect and honour during each of the days of his stay at Janakpur, and he was served most diligently and cheerfully in all possible manners to make him exceptionally comfortable and his stay extremely pleasant every day of the days of his stay even as he was entertained in thousands of ways with greater and enhanced attention with the passage of time, without any let-up or negligence. (3)

There were newer festivities and celebrations every day in the city (of Janakpur), and the citizens thoroughly enjoyed the stay of the marriage party so much so that no one liked that the guests should go back (to Ayodhya). (4)

[Note—¹It is not clear whether this verse no. 3 refers only to king Dasrath or to all other members of the marriage party. In all probabilities, all the members of the marriage party were shown the same respect as king Dasrath, for otherwise it would seem odd and uncourteous on the part of Janak to neglect others in the same group of guests. Earlier also it has been said that Janak had shown the same respect to others in the marriage party as he had shown to Dasrath—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 321 which expressly makes this point.

So therefore, we can safely read this verse as follows also—“The guests (king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party) were shown newer forms of respect from day to day, and all of them were entertained in thousands of ways with greater and enhanced attention with the passage of time.”]

बहुत दिवस बीते एहि भाँती । जनु सनेह रजु बँधे बराती ॥ ५ ॥

bahuta divasa bītē ēhi bhām̐tī. janu sanēha raju bam̐dhē barātī. 5.

Many happy days passed in the aforesaid way in an atmosphere of joyous merriment and abundant enjoyment, with king Dasrath repeatedly seeking permission to leave and king Janak asking him to stay for some more time. It appeared that the groom's party was tied in a strong thread of love and affection that prevented them from leaving the city of Janakpur, the bride's place. So they tarried there cheerfully and gladly for a time longer than expected. (5)

[Note—Refer Chaupai line no. 2 above.]

कौसिक सतानंद तब जाई । कहा बिदेह नृपहि समुझाई ॥ ६ ॥

अब दसरथ कहँ आयसु देहू । जद्यपि छाड़ि न सकहु सनेहू ॥ ७ ॥

kausika satānanda taba jā'ī. kahā bidēha nṛpahi samujhā'ī. 6.

aba dasaratha kaham̐ āyasu dēhū. jadyapi chāḍi na sakahu sanēhū. 7.

Then, realising that there was an inordinate delay for the marriage party to leave Janakpur and proceed to its kingdom of Ayodhya, sages Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and Satanand, the royal priest of Janakpur, went to Janak and advised him thus—[6]

‘Now you must grant leave to Dasrath and allow him to proceed to his place¹ even though you don't like it and would prefer that he continues to stay here for some more days out of your affection for him and the bond of mutual respect and endearment that you have forged with him as well as the rest of the groom's party. [But oh king, this is not practical, for after all the groom's party cannot stay at the bride's place indefinitely. All guests, no matter how loving they may be, have to leave the host's place sooner or later, and every good thing has to come to an end one day. A sovereign of one kingdom feels very uneasy and odd if he has to stay at another sovereign's place for more time than it is absolutely necessary. Dasrath has to attend to the state affairs of his own kingdom of Ayodhya, and many important issues requiring his personal attention must be

piling up there in his absence. So it is wise and prudent and advisable now that you must grant Dasrath permission to leave.]’ [7] (6-7)

[Note—¹Surely it was sage Vishwamitra who said it. Satanand accompanied Vishwamitra because he was the kingdom’s chief priest, but he would not have addressed king Dasrath by his name because it would be impolite for him to do so by the virtue of his being Janak’s priest and on his payroll. If it was Satanand who spoke to Janak, then he would have used the title of a ‘king’ as a prefix to Dasrath, and not merely as ‘Dasrath’.

It is important to note here that out of the two sages, Vishwamitra was the senior one, and a senior person is the one who gives advice to the king.

Another reason for Vishwamitra speaking instead of Satanand was that they consulted each other before hand and decided that if Satanand spoke, the chances were that Janak would overlook his advice simply because Satanand, after all, was his employee, but Janak will certainly not disobey Vishwamitra for the latter was an independent sage. Besides this, both Janak and Dasrath were highly obliged to Vishwamitra and held him in high esteem, so they could never think of not doing what this sage asked.

The third reason was that Vishwamitra had easy access to king Dasrath as opposed to Satanand as the latter had to observe a lot of formal protocol because he was on the payroll of the kingdom of Janakpur and represented king Janak. Dasrath would confide with Vishwamitra and not with Satanand. So when Vishwamitra said that Dasrath wants to leave, Janak understood that the sage is speaking on behalf of king Dasrath who was so overwhelmed by Janak’s affection, politeness and hospitality that he could not muster courage to insist on going back to Ayodhya on the face of Janak. So Janak would think that Dasrath had chosen sage Vishwamitra to act as his emissary and request the host king to grant him permission to leave.]

भलेहिं नाथ कहि सचिव बोलाए । कहि जय जीव सीस तिन्ह नाए ॥ ८ ॥

bhalēhiṁ nātha kahi saciva bōlā'ē. kahi jaya jīva sīsa tinha nā'ē. 8.

Janak agreed reluctantly, saying, ‘Alright Lords, I will do as you say’.

Then he summoned his chief minister who came forthwith, saluted the king and bowed his head before him¹. (8)

[Note—¹Whenever the chief minister came to his king, this was the standard way he showed his respect to the latter. This has similarities elsewhere also—for instance, when Dasrath’s chief minister known as Sumantra came to him, he also followed the same procedure—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 5; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38; and (ii) Doha no. 148.]

दो०. अवधनाथु चाहत चलन भीतर करहु जनाउ ।

भाए प्रेमबस सचिव सुनि बिप्र सभासद राउ ॥ ३३२ ॥

dōhā.

avadhanāthu cāhata calana bhītara karahu janā'u.
bha'e prēmabasa saciva suni bipra sabhāsada rā'u. 332.

King Janak instructed his chief minister—‘The lord of Ayodhya (king Dasrath) wishes to leave. So go to the interior of the palace (where the queens and other female members of the royal household live) and inform them of this.’

When the chief minister heard this, he was overcome with emotions, and so were the Brahmins and other courtiers present there, as well as the king himself. (Doha no. 332)

चौ०. पुरबासी सुनि चलिहि बराता । बूझत बिकल परस्पर बाता ॥ १ ॥
सत्य गवनु सुनि सब बिलखाने । मनहुँ साँझ सरसिज सकुचाने ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

purabāsī suni calihi barātā. būjhata bikala paraspara bātā. 1.
satya gavanu suni saba bilakhānē. manahum' sāṃjha sarasija sakucānē. 2.

As the word spread and the citizens of Janakpur came to know that the groom's party would be leaving shortly, they became sorrowful and anxiously asked each other if the news was indeed true. (1)

When they learnt that it was the truth, all of them lamented and felt very sad and regretful. They became sorrowful and depressed just like the lotus that shrivels up when dusk falls.

[As soon as the news spread in the city that Lord Ram's marriage party was preparing to leave, a pall of gloom descended upon Janakpur. The celebrations and rejoicing were cut short, and the atmosphere suddenly became frosty and heavy as if there was some great loss in the offing. All the singing, dancing, music and merriment ended, and they were replaced by a somber mood.] (2)

जहँ जहँ आवत बसे बराती । तहँ तहँ सिद्ध चला बहु भाँती ॥ ३ ॥

jaham' jaham' āvata basē barātī. taham' taham' sid'dha calā bahu bhāntī. 3.

Countless varieties of provisions and grocery items were sent by Janak to all those places where the marriage party had halted on its way from Ayodhya to Janakpur. (3)

[Note—Janak understood the need for making arrangement for adequate supply of food, drinks, grocery items other things of daily need which the marriage party would need for the long-haul journey back from Janakpur to Ayodhya. So, as soon as it was decided that the marriage party would leave, Janak sent these provisions in advance so that the party does not face any inconvenience on the way back home.]

बिबिध भाँति मेवा पकवाना । भोजन साजु न जाइ बखाना ॥ ४ ॥

भरि भरि बसहँ अपार कहारा । पठई जनक अनेक सुसारा ॥ ५ ॥

bibidha bhāmṭi mēvā pakavānā. bhōjana sāju na jā'i bakhānā. 4.
bhari bhari basaham' apāra kahārā. paṭha'īm janaka anēka susārā. 5.

Janak ordered that seasoned food and sweets of countless varieties be prepared. It is not possible to describe either the food or the royal paraphernalia (i.e. the numerous items given as marriage gift to the newly married couple by the bride's father—such as robes, garments, ornaments, household items such as bedsteads, mattresses etc.) that were arranged to be sent with the marriage party. (4)

All these countless things were put on the back of oxen or were carried by porters who were sent by Janak to the in-law's (Dasrath's) place. (5)

तुरग लाख रथ सहस पचीसा । सकल सँवारे नख अरु सीसा ॥ ६ ॥
मत सहस दस सिंधुर साजे । जिन्हहि देखि दिसिकुंजर लाजे ॥ ७ ॥
कनक बसन मनि भरि भरि जाना । महिषीं धेनु बस्तु बिधि नाना ॥ ८ ॥

turaga lākha ratha sahasa pacīsā. sakala sam'vārē nakha aru sīsā. 6.
matta sahasa dasa sindhura sājē. jinhahi dēkhi disikunjara lājē. 7.
kanaka basana mani bhari bhari jānā. mahiṣī'm dhēnu bastu bidhi nānā. 8.

[Verse nos. 6-8 list some of the items that were gifted by Janak.]

One lakh horses (1 lakh = 1,00,000) and twenty-five thousand gilded chariots were fully decorated from bottom to top (nakha aru sīsā)¹. (6)

Similarly, ten thousand robust, strong, rugged and healthy elephants were beautifully decorated. Even the elephants that support the eight quarters of the world² on their muscular backs felt abashed when they saw these fully adorned elephants (that were gifted by Janak to king Dasrath). (7)

Gold, clothes and precious gems were sent in huge containers loaded on carts. Then there were she-buffaloes, cows and countless other items of different kinds. (8)

[Note—¹The horses' hooves were plated with foils of gold or silver; their girdles, harness, bridles and saddles etc. were too made of precious metals studded with priceless gems and pearls. Their backs were draped with costly embroidered cloth. The chariots were similarly decked up beautifully. All their parts were polished and oiled and gold or silver plated; the seats were upholstered with the finest of cloth; the royal standard was gold embroidered; and the wood-work was exquisitely carved, and inlaid with ivory and precious metals and stones.

²These eight elephants are called "Diggajs". They support the heavy world on their backs at eight points—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

दो0. दाइज अमित न सकिअ कहि दीन्ह बिदेहँ बहोरि ।
जो अवलोकत लोकपति लोक संपदा थोरि ॥ ३३३ ॥

dōhā.

dā'ija amita na saki'a kahi dīnha bidēham' bahōri.
jō avalōkata lōkapati lōka sampadā thōri. 333.

Janak was not contented with what he had sent in advance, so he gave more marriage gifts which were so huge in quantity and varied in quality that it is not possible for anyone to say what they were, how many they were, or of what quality they were.

In fact, when the king of the world, i.e. Indra, the king of the gods, saw them he felt that the entire wealth of his kingdom (the world; the heaven) was only a trifle as compared to these gifts that Janak sent with the marriage party. (Doha no. 333)

चौ०. सबु समाजु एहि भाँति बनाई । जनक अवधपुर दीन्ह पठाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sabu samāju ēhi bhām'ti banā'ī. janaka avadhapura dīnha paṭhā'ī. 1.

In this above-mentioned way, Janak arranged for all the things at a grand scale and sent them to Ayodhya. (1)

[Note—This verse clearly tells us that whatever gifts Janak arranged for king Dasrath as well as his son-in-laws and other members of the marriage party were sent by him directly to Ayodhya. These gifts were sent with an advance party that also took care of arrangements all along the way from the city of Janakpur till the outer fringes of the kingdom to ensure that when the marriage party arrived at these spots they will find all arrangements in place and will not face any inconvenience.

Though it is not mentioned here, contingents of Janakpur's army must have accompanied this advance party carrying costly gifts because of the fear of loot on the way. This sending of gifts ahead of the actual marriage party was a strategic move to ensure that the road was cleared and secured in advance to pre-empt any untoward incident when the marriage party passed through that way a little behind.]

चलिहि बरात सुनत सब रानी । बिकल मीनगन जनु लघु पानी ॥ २ ॥

calihi barāta sunata saba rānīm. bikala mīnagana janu laghu pānīm. 2.

[This verse picks up the narration from the end of Doha no. 332.]

When the queens¹ heard that the grooms'² party was preparing to leave, they became anxious and distressed like the fish that faces the prospect of having to live with scarcity of water³. (2)

[Note—¹The pleural term “queens” refers to the queen of Janak, named Sunayana, and the queen of his younger brother, Kushdhwaj. Besides them, Janak had other cousins and

family relations, and all their wives were collectively treated as members of the royal household, and hence addressed as ‘queens’.

²Similarly, the pleural term “grooms” refers to Lord Ram and his other three brothers, i.e. Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, all of whom were married to cousin sisters in Janakpur.

³Tulsidas had chosen this example very cleverly. The fish would die if there was no water, but when it faces the prospect of living in a limited supply of water it is scared because it will have to lead a tormented life for as long as it lives. The fish would feel the agony of death only for an instant and for once if it had to die for complete lack of water, but when that water is in short-supply, say only a half-dry puddle as compared to a large pond or river, the fish is neither able to die and get rid of the torments, nor can it live happily and contentedly as it would do when the water is in abundance.

Thus, the queens would have to spend the rest of their lives suffering the pain of separation from their beloved daughters and their equally beloved sons-in-law whom they will not be able to meet quite often for the rest of their lives as they have been doing for the past many days while the marriage party had camped at Janakpur. Their condition is like that fish which is forced to live in constrained conditions due to bad luck.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 162.]

पुनि पुनि सीय गोद करि लेहीं । देइ असीस सिखावनु देहीं ॥ ३ ॥

puni puni sīya gōda kari lēhīm. dē'i asīsa sikhāvanu dēhīm. 3.

They (the queen-mothers) repeatedly picked up Sita on to their laps, affectionately embracing her, blessing her and giving her motherly advice. (3)

[Note—The loving mothers were overcome with emotions as the final hour of departure of the marriage party arrived. Sita was exceptionally dear to them. So they embraced her and consoled her in many ways, blessing her and teaching her what to do and how to behave in her new home with her in-laws.

The following verses tell us what advice the queen-mothers gave Sita.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 170.]

होएहु संतत पियहि पिआरी । चिरु अहिबात असीस हमारी ॥ ४ ॥

सासु ससुर गुर सेवा करेहू । पति रुख लखि आयसु अनुसरेहू ॥ ५ ॥

hō'ēhu santata piyahi pi'ārī. ciru ahibāta asīsa hamārī. 4.

sāsu sasura gura sēvā karēhū. pati rukha lakhi āyasu anusarēhū. 5.

The mothers blessed Sita, saying, ‘May you enjoy the love and affection of your dear husband for a life-time, and may you live happily with him for an eternity. This is our blessing for you. (4)

Be diligent in serving your mother-and-father in-law, as well as your Guru¹. Always pay attention to what your husband wants, and act accordingly². [That is, always obey your husband and keep him pleased.]’ (5)

[Note—¹The Guru of Sita after her marriage with Lord Ram would be sage Vasistha because he is the Guru of the royal family of Ayodhya.

²As we move on with this classical story, we read later on that when Sita met the wife of sage Atri named Anusuiya during her journey through the forest with her husband Lord Ram while he was spending fourteen years of time in forest exile, she was also advised by the learned hermitess that a woman who serves her husband faithfully and diligently is blessed with a long and happy life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 ‘ka’ along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-19.

In other words, serving the husband and being faithful to him is the sacrosanct rule for a married lady.]

अति सनेह बस सखीं सयानी । नारि धरम सिखवहिं मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

ati sanēha basa sakhīm sayānī. nāri dharama sikhavahim mṛdu bānī. 6.

Sita’s friends were also overwhelmed with emotions and affection for her. They also taught her sweetly the duties of a married woman and how she can be happy in her married life (like her mother had done earlier). (6)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 102 while narrating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati. At that time also, Parvati’s mother and friends had taught her the customs of the society and family as well as norms of behaviour she should follow in her married life.]

सादर सकल कुअँरि समुझाई । रानिन्ह बार बार उर लाई ॥ ७ ॥

sādara sakala ku'am'ri samujhā'īm. rāninha bāra bāra ura lā'īm. 7.

All of them explained the various duties and norms of a married life to Sita as well as other princesses (i.e. Maandavi, Srutkirti and Urmila).

The queen-mothers repeatedly clasped the princesses (Sita and her other three sisters) to their bosoms as waves of love and emotions surged through their hearts for all of them (as this was the final time they were meeting their beloved daughters, and they did not know when this chance would come again in life). (7)

बहुरि बहुरि भेटहिं महतारीं । कहहिं बिरंचि रचीं कत नारीं ॥ ८ ॥

bahuri bahuri bhēṭahim mahatārīm. kahahim biran'ci racīm kata nārīm. 8.

The mothers repeatedly met and embraced them (the four princesses) and lamented at the fate of a woman, exclaiming, ‘Why did the creator Brahma ever create a woman (because one day she has to get married and leave her parental home and grieving parents for all times to come; she has to abandon her home and her acquaintances, leaving everyone in grief, to go and live with strangers in a new home to which she has to adjust herself against all odds)!’ (8)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102 while narrating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva with

Parvati. At that time also, Parvati's mother had lamented at the fate of a woman who has leave her parent's home to go and live at her in-law's place which is quite alien to her.]

दो०. तेहि अवसर भाइन्ह सहित रामु भानु कुल केतु ।
चले जनक मंदिर मुदित बिदा करावन हेतु ॥ ३३४ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi avasara bhā'inha sahita rāmu bhānu kula kētu.
calē janaka mandira mudita bidā karāvana hētu. 334.

At that moment, Lord Ram, who is like the shining star of the solar race, accompanied by his brothers, cheerfully proceeded to the palace of king Janak to take permission from him to depart from Janakpur. (Doha no. 334)

चौ०. चारिउ भाइ सुभायँ सुहाए । नगर नारि नर देखन धाए ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

cāri'u bhā'i subhāyam' suhā'ē. nagara nāri nara dēkhana dhā'ē. 1.

The people of the city of Janakpur, both the males as well as the females, ran out to see the four brothers who were naturally pleasing and charming to look at. (1)

[Note—We have read in Doha no. 334 that the four brothers left the place where they were staying with their father Dasrath for the palace of king Janak to take formal permission from their in-laws to go back to their own kingdom of Ayodhya. Meanwhile, word had already spread that the marriage party was preparing to leave—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333.

So when Lord Ram and his other three brothers came on the road leading to the royal palace of Janak, the citizens came out in hordes to have a look at them and if possible interact with them and say their good bye to them. The citizens knew by experience how obliging, kind, friendly and amiable Lord Ram and Laxman were, and also that their charismatic sight was exceedingly pleasing for the beholder's eyes because they had already met the two brothers when they had gone to visit the city when they arrived there with sage Vishwamitra—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 224.

The citizens also knew that the other two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, were similar to Lord Ram and Laxman in their charm and friendly nature—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 and Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 311.

The citizens therefore decided that when the four brothers were on their way to Janak's place, it was the most opportune moment and probably their last chance to meet them and say good bye—because later on there would be lot of royal formalities and observance of protocol which would prevent them from coming close to the brothers in

an informal way and bid good bye to them at the personal level. This general thinking would be clear in the next few verses that follow herein below.]

कोउ कह चलन चहत हहिं आजू । कीन्ह बिदेह बिदा कर साजू ॥ २ ॥
 लेहु नयन भरि रूप निहारी । प्रिय पाहुने भूप सुत चारी ॥ ३ ॥
 को जानै केहिं सुकृत सयानी । नयन अतिथि कीन्हे बिधि आनी ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u kaha calana cahata hahim ājū. kīnha bidēha bidā kara sājū. 2.
 lēhu nayana bhari rūpa nihārī. priya pāhunē bhūpa suta cārī. 3.
 kō jānai kēhim sukṛta sayānī. nayana atithi kīnhē bidhi ānī. 4.

Someone in the crowd said—‘They want start on their return journey today, and this has become apparent because Janak has already prepared all the paraphernalia required to see the marriage party off and bid the four brothers good bye. [Besides this, he has already dispatched the advance party with marriage gifts etc. to Ayodhya.] (2)

So this is the ripe time for us to reap the rewards of seeing the beautiful image of the four brothers till our eyes are contented (because soon this chance would be lost forever). Indeed, these four noble sons of the great king (i.e. Lord Ram and his other brothers who were sons of king Dasrath) are like honoured guests for our eyes! (3)

Oh come to think of it dear friends, god knows what good deeds we have done that the creator Vidhi (who decides what rewards or punishments should be given to the creatures of this world) decided to bring them (the four brothers) to become the lovable guests-of-honour for our eyes.

[The citizens talked amongst themselves thus—“Just as one goes out of one’s way to serve an honourable guest, and no matter how good the service is the host always thinks that he could have done more to please the guest, let us show our greatest of affection, love and respect to these four noble brothers for the last time before their departure for their home by rushing out to meet them, exchanging pleasantries and greetings, and telling them to remember us forever. Let us have our eye-fill of their pleasant sight from up close, let’s get close and touch them and shake their hands to say good bye at the personal level, and if possible keep some souvenirs as token of our meeting them, to be kept as a cherished memorabilia for our own generation and for the next generations to come.”] (4)

[Note—As soon as the word was out that the marriage party was preparing to leave and Lord Ram and his brothers were going to take final leave from the royal household of Janak, the citizens poured out on the streets in hordes. The streets were literally flooded with them, a scene reminiscent of the time when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to visit the city for the first time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 220.

Lord Ram had won the heart and the mind of the entire citizenry of Janakpur with his charm-offensive so much so that he had become dearer to the citizens more than their own lives and families—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; and (ii) Doha no. 223.

At that time also the citizens had thanked their benevolent stars and the result of their good deeds that had made it possible for them to get an opportunity to have Lord Ram as

the guest-of-honour for their eyes, for otherwise it was a distant dream for them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222.]

मरनसीलु जिमि पाव पिऊषा । सुरतरु लहै जनम कर भूखा ॥ ५ ॥
 पाव नारकी हरिपदु जैसें । इन्ह कर दरसनु हम कहँ तैसें ॥ ६ ॥
 निरखि राम सोभा उर धरहू । निज मन फनि मूरति मनि करहू ॥ ७ ॥

maranasīlu jimi pāva pi'ūṣā. surataru lahai janama kara bhūkhā. 5.
 pāva nārakī haripadu jaisēm. inha kara darasanu hama kham' taisēm. 6.
 nirakhi rāma sōbhā ura dharahū. nija mana phani mūrati mani karahū. 7.

[These three verses give us an idea of the eagerness with which the citizens saw the charming image of Lord Ram, as well as the intensity of their longing for his image to be firmly enshrined in their hearts and etched in their memories for all times to come.]

Just as a dying person suddenly gets to drink the ambrosia of life; just as a person who has been hungry for a lifetime suddenly finds the evergreen tree of the gods¹ that provides succulent fruits that fulfills all his desires [5];---

---Just as a sinful person destined to go to hell suddenly attains heaven and the exalted stature of the Lord's divine abode—similarly for us, the opportunity to have a divine sight of Lord Ram was unimaginable to have ever come true in this lifetime!² [6] (5-6)

Therefore oh dear friends, watch Lord Ram closely and enshrine his beautiful image in your hearts, making it a 'Mani' (the serpent's gem) and your heart as a hooded serpent that closely guards this Mani.³ (7)

[Note—It is believed in mythology there is a hooded serpent, and a luminescent sac, the size of a small gem or pearl, is present on its raised hood. This sac gives out light, and the serpent sees its way in the dark due to this light. This sac is filled with a gelly that is effervescent with light, and hence it is known as a 'Mani' because it is shaped like a precious gem, is self-illuminated like a gem, and is so precious for the serpent that it guards it with its life because it would be blind without it.

The citizens invoke this metaphor to emphasise that just as the Mani is very dear for the serpent who bears it, Lord Ram's divine image is also very dear for them, and just as the serpent would die if the Mani is stolen, they too would die if for some cause they happen to forget the divine Lord Ram.

The view of Lord Ram evoked undiluted love and devotion in the hearts and minds of the citizens of Janakpur. Their emotions were all the more intense and their fire of their love for Lord Ram so intensively stoked because the time of departure had arrived, and they did not know when they would get another chance to meet Lord Ram and interact with him in their lives. So they encourage each other to see him intensively for the last time and firmly etch his magnificent image in their hearts and minds so much so that it becomes a part of their beings, a part of their inner-self without which they would be virtually dismembered.

¹Another idea is that when a man is scorched by the heat of the sun, it is only then that he realizes the comfort that is got under the shade of a tree—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69.

²When Lord Ram was going to the forest during his 14-year exile, the villagers on the way had also rushed out to have a glimpse of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman like the

citizens of Janakpur here have done. All those who saw the Lord on the way to the forest then also expressed similar emotions of their being extremely lucky to have had the chance to see the Lord which they could not have imagined in their lives. There are countless verses to this effect in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. For instance—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 113; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 116; (vi) Doha no. 118 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8; and (vii) Doha no. 122 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

³The great sage Bharadwaj has asserted that “to have a chance to see Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita is the best fruit for all spiritual endeavours”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 210.]

एहि बिधि सबहि नयन फलु देता । गए कुअँर सब राज निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi sabahi nayana phalu dētā. da'ē ku'amra saba rāja nikētā. 8.

On this wise, giving all the citizens the fruit (reward) of their eyes¹, the four princes went to the palace of the king (Janak—to seek permission from him to depart from the city of Janakpur and proceed to their own kingdom of Ayodhya). (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was very gracious and obliging by nature. So he did not deny anyone the chance to have an eye-contact with him, if it was not possible for all the citizens to personally meet him and have a word with him. For those who could not come close due to the huge crowd, he waved his hands as a gesture of saying farewell. The gracious Lord made eye-contact with each individual, giving each person the benefit of feeling that Lord Ram has given him his personal attention. This was a charming initiative of the Lord that bowled-over all the citizens of Janakpur, and they would all cherish these wonderful moments that would remain carved in their memories for their lifetime. This ‘charm-initiative’ began when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to visit Janakpur for the first time after they arrived in the city with sage Vishwamitra and it continues till this day.

The hungry and eager eyes of the love-struck citizens of Janakpur devoured each moment of their viewing of Lord Ram just in the way that a dying man eyes a pot of ambrosia of life, a hungry man the fruits of the evergreen tree of the gods, and the sinful man who is being dragged to hell, the gates of heaven—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-7 herein above.]

दो०. रूप सिंधु सब बंधु लखि हरषि उठा रनिवासु ।
करहिं निछावरि आरती महा मुदित मन सासु ॥ ३३५ ॥

dōhā.

rūpa sindhu saba bandhu lakhi haraṣi uṭhā ranivāsu.
karaḥim nichāvari āratī mahā mudita mana sāsu. 335.

As soon as the ladies of the royal household (of Janak) saw the four brothers, who were like oceans of beauty and charm, arrive, they got up excitedly, full of delight.

The mother-in-law (queen Sunayana) scattered gifts around the brothers and performed their Arti (i.e. she welcomed them by showering gifts and showing of lighted lamps which is a standard practice to welcome an honoured guest). (Doha no. 335)

चौ०. देखि राम छबि अति अनुरागीं । प्रेमबिबस पुनि पुनि पद लागीं ॥ १ ॥
रही न लाज प्रीति उर छाई । सहज सनेहु बरनि किमि जाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi rāma chabi ati anurāgīṁ. prēmabibasa puni puni pada lāgīṁ. 1.
rahī na lāja prīti ura chāī. sahaja sanēhu barani kimi jāī. 2.

The more the mothers-in-law watched the beautiful image of Lord Ram, the more overwhelmed with love and affection they became, and were so much moved by their emotions that they repeatedly fell down at the holy feet of the Lord*. (1)

The love and affection for the Lord was so overpowering for them that this emotion clouded all their sense of protocol that they were expected to observe as queens in this mundane world, and the feeling of shyness virtually abandoned them. How is it possible to describe the natural affection and love for the Lord that surged in their inner-beings (which compelled them to shed all hesitation or inhibitions when they fell at Lord Ram's feet though they were his mothers-in-law and should have blessed him instead of touching his feet)? (2)

[Note—When one is overcome with love for anyone, all sense of rationality takes a back-seat. The queen-mothers knew that this was the last chance to meet Lord Ram, and they could not control their natural urge to fall at the Lord feet as a mark of total surrender before the Lord, and hinting to the Lord that he should always be kind towards them and remember them as those who have sought his blessings.

There is another connotation in this gesture of falling at the feet of one's son-in-law. The mother-in-law, most humbly and pleadingly, requests her son-in-law by this gesture to be kind towards her daughter who is now the latter's wife but is un-accustomed to his ways of life. So he must be kind towards the innocent girl, and overlook as well as forgive all the mistakes that she may make in life. In effect, the mother-in-law pleads to the groom on behalf of her daughter to be kind towards the latter.

Now, another interesting thing to note is that though it is not specifically mentioned in the verses that the mothers-in-law were more charmed by Lord Ram as compared to his other brothers, but elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas it has been expressly affirmed that though the four brothers were equally lovable, but Lord Ram was more so, and he was like an ocean of bliss, beatitude, felicity and happiness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 198.

When one is overcome with positive emotions for someone, and develops an immense sense of honour and respect for him, one would like to express his appreciation and sense of adoration by repeatedly undertaking gestures that would show how happy and joyous one feels by meeting the object of his admiration. Embracing, holding hands, or falling at the feet are some of the ways of expressing the sense of excessive happiness and joy. One 'repeats' the gestures again and again to tell the object of one's adoration that doing it once is not enough, and so one wishes to repeat it over and over again.

There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas where one has fallen repeatedly at the feet of Lord Ram to express the immensity of happiness and gratitude as well as the feeling of blessedness at meeting the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 211 where Ahilya has repeatedly fell at the holy feet of Lord Ram; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 49 that tells us Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, has fallen repeatedly at the feet of the Lord when the latter had granted him refuge.

Sometimes it has happened that the devotee has fallen at the feet of Lord Ram and clasped it so affectionately that in spite of repeated attempts the Lord could not lift him from the ground—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 which describes how Hanuman has clasped the Lord's feet, and the Lord repeatedly trying to lift him but Hanuman refuses to get up.

*We shall read later on the story that when Lord Ram had gone to his mother Kaushalya to seek her permission to go to the forest, she has also fallen at the Lord's feet and clasped it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57. But that was a time of sorrow and Kaushalya had fell at the Lord's feet in distress as compared to the Lord's mothers-in-law who fall at his feet out of joy in the present verse.

Refer also to: "Janki Mangal", verse no. 165.]

भाइन्ह सहित उबटि अन्हवाए । छरस असन अति हेतु जेवाँए ॥ ३ ॥

bhā'inha sahita ubaṭi anhavā'ē. charasa asana ati hētu jēvā'ē. 3.

The four brothers were given ceremonial bath by first rubbing cosmetics on their bodies and then washing it off with scented water. Then they were affectionately entertained by serving them mouth-watering dishes having all the six types of tastes¹. (3)

[Note—¹Refer note of Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 329 herein above. This was the first time the four grooms have gone to meet their mothers-in-law. It is customary for the mother-in-law to feed her son-in-law when he comes to meet her for the first time after marriage.]

As we shall note below in verse nos. 4-6, the mothers-in-law were not yet aware that the four brothers have come to seek permission to leave for Ayodhya. They thought that they have come to pay a routine courtesy call. So, the mothers-in-law asked to take their baths and get fresh, and then they fed the four grooms with the choicest of delectable dishes.]

बोले रामु सुअवसरु जानी । सील सनेह सकुचमय बानी ॥ ४ ॥

राउ अवधपुर चहत सिधाए । बिदा होन हम इहाँ पठाए ॥ ५ ॥

मातु मुदित मन आयसु देहू । बालक जानि करब नित नेहू ॥ ६ ॥

bōlē rāmu su'avasaru jānī. sīla sanēha sakucamaya bānī. 4.
rā'u avadhapura cahata sidhā'ē. bidā hōna hama ihām'paṭhā'ē. 5.
mātu mudita mana āyasu dēhū. bālaka jāni karaba nita nēhū. 6.

Getting an opportunity, Lord Ram spoke modestly, almost hesitantly, in a sweet and affectionate manner¹. (4)

He requested his mothers-in-law—‘The king (our father Dasrath) wishes to leave for his kingdom of Ayodhya, and he has sent us to take leave from you². (5)

So oh mothers, please grant us permission with a cheerful mind to leave. Treat us like your own children³, and have an enduring affection for us.’ (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was of a very decent, amiable and kind nature, as well as good mannered. So, whenever he had to speak he was careful to be sweet and courteous as much as possible. This is clear in the entire episode of sage Parashuram at the time of the breaking of the bow as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 283. Lord Ram had even admonished his younger brother Laxman and asked him to refrain from answering back to the sage when Laxman had shown his annoyance at the angry outburst of Parashuram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 278.

Then later on in the story we shall read that when the Lord found that his step-mother Kaikeyi was fretting and fuming for sending him to forest exile and his father was overcome with sorrows and dilemma, he had shown exemplary self-control and spoke very politely to both of them, even comforting his own mother Kaushalya in most polite terms to bear with the circumstances for some time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 40; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Doha no. 42; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43; (iv) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 53.

Still later on we read that Lord Ram was full of hesitation when he was faced with the prospect of having to resolutely refuse to go back to Ayodhya at the time when Bharat and the rest of the assembly had been insisting on the Lord’s return from the forest during the conclave held at Chitrakoot—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.

²As noted in verse no. 3 above, this is the first time the queens came to know that the four brothers have come to seek permission to leave for their home, the kingdom of Ayodhya.

³A mother has natural love for her children, and she treats them equally. Lord Ram spoke on the behalf of all his brothers, and it was a polite way of saying that just as the queen mothers had been treating all the four princesses equally, they should also treat their four sons-in-law equally, with equal affection. This was a polite way of exchanging pleasantries before saying a final good bye to their mothers-in-law.]

सुनत बचन बिलखेउ रनिवासू । बोलि न सकहिं प्रेमबस सासू ॥ ७ ॥

sunata bacana bilakhē'u ranivāsū. bōli na sakahīṁ prēmabasa sāsū. 7.

As soon as they heard these words (that the beloved grooms were leaving), the ladies of the royal household were extremely distressed. The mothers-in-law were so overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection that they were dumb-founded, unable to speak a word. (7)

[Note—The ladies were distressed because they won’t get a chance to see and interact with the four brothers, and especially with Lord Ram, again.

The mothers-in-law however were overcome with emotions of love because they treated the four brothers as their 'sons'. We have already seen in the previous verse no. 6 that Lord Ram has asked the mothers-in-law, the queens, to treat him and his brothers as their children.

The ladies of the city as well as the royal household had a different attitude towards Lord Ram and his brothers as compared to the queen mothers: whereas the queen mothers treated the four brothers as their 'sons' because they were married to their daughters, the other ladies obviously would not do so. These ladies were charmed by the magnetic personality of the Lord and his brothers, and they now regretted that they would be denied the opportunity of frequent interaction with them once they leave Janakpur.]

हृदयँ लगाइ कुअँरि सब लीन्ही । पतिन्ह सौँपि बिनती अति कीन्ही ॥ ८ ॥

hrdayam' lagā'i ku'am'ri saba līnhī. patinha saumpi binatī ati kīnhī. 8.

They (the queen mothers) embraced all the four princesses, and while affectionately handing them over to their respective husbands they respectfully prayed to them (or made humble submission to the four brothers). (8)

[Note—Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 167-168, and Chanda no. 21 in this context.

After the wedding ceremony was over, the grooms went to the place where the marriage party was lodged, and the brides came back to their palace.

What the mother-in-law said is narrated below.]

छं०. करि बिनय सिय रामहि समरपी जोरि कर पुनि पुनि कहै । १ ।
बलि जाउँ तात सुजान तुझ कहूँ बिदित गति सब की अहै ॥ २ ॥
परिवार पुरजन मोहि राजहि प्रानप्रिय सिय जानिबी । ३ ।
तुलसीस सीलु सनेहु लखि निज किंकरी करि मानिबी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kari binaya siya rāmahī samarapī jōri kara puni puni kahai. 1.
bali jā'um' tāta sujāna tumha kahum' bidita gati saba kī ahai. 2.
parivāra purajana mōhi rājahi prānapriya siya jānibī. 3.
tulasīsa sīlu sanēhu lakhi nija kiṅkarī kari mānibī. 4.

The queen-mother Sunayana joined her palms as a token of submission and great respect for Lord Ram, submitted Sita to him and earnestly prayed to him repeatedly (i.e. she repeated her submission and request again and again) [Chanda line no. 1],---

‘Oh my dear son (“tāta”), I submit myself before your honourable self (“bali jā'um' sujāna”), and I understand that you know what I wish to speak and what is in my mind as you know the inner feelings and thoughts of all living beings (“bidita gati saba kī ahai”). [Chanda line no. 2]

You may know that Janki (Sita) is dearer than life for all of us—for our entire family, all the citizens of Janakpur, myself, as well as the king (Janak).

[In other words, Since you, oh my dear son-in-law Sri Ram, know the inner thoughts and feelings of all living beings because you are all-knowing and omniscient, it is sure that you are also aware of the amount of love and affection we all have for Sita; she is very dear to all of us.] [Chanda line no. 3]

Therefore, oh Lord of Tulsidas (*tulasīsa*)¹, have love for her and be courteous to her, and treating her as your maid (*kiṅkarī*), you should forgive all her shortcomings and mistakes².’ [Chanda line no. 4] (Chanda line nos. 1-4)

[Note—¹There is a clever play of words here, and this verse also clearly shows that the events that are being narrated here by poet-author of this classical story, Goswami Tulsidas, are in the way he visualised them on the canvas of his mind. It is obvious that Sunayana cannot refer to Lord Ram as the “lord of Tulsidas”—for the simple reason that Tulsidas wasn’t even born then!

Tulsidas uses this opportunity to stress that his Lord, Sri Ram, is very gracious and benevolent upon him; the Lord forgives all misdemeanours of Tulsidas and overlooks his mistakes. That is why the queen-mother refers to him to stress upon Lord Ram to be gracious and benevolent towards Sita just like he has been towards his ‘servant’ (“Daas”) named Tulsi (“Tulsi + Daas” = Tulsidas).

But the play on the word ‘Tulsi’ also has another connotation: ‘Tulsi’ is the Hindi word for the Basil plant which is very dear to Lord Vishnu, and there is a legendary story behind it which says that when Lord Vishnu had to cheat the chaste wife named Brinda of the demon named Jaalandhar so as to kill him, she had cursed the Lord to become a stone. So Lord Vishnu transformed into the Shaaligram stone which is like a rounded pebble. But instead of getting angry at Brinda for cursing him, he realised that she was right to be angry at him, and so the Lord blessed her that she would always accompany him in the form of a leave of the Basil plant. Thus, it is said that all forms of offerings to Lord Vishnu are sanctified only when leaves of Tulsi plant are added to them because Tulsi is dearer to Vishnu than anything else.

In other words, Lord Vishnu became the eternal ‘Lord of Tulsi’ ever since the event narrated above. And since Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, mother Sunayana invokes this incident to remind him that he must love Sita with the same affection and eternal commitment with which Lord Vishnu had accepted Tulsi.

²We shall read later on in the story that Lord Ram has declared that he loves his ‘sevak’ more than anyone or anything else—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 16. The word “sevak” literally means a servant who selflessly serves the Lord, but for all practical purposes it refers to a devotee of the Lord and one who has submitted oneself before the Lord so much so that he or she has no other succour and refuge anywhere in this world.

Now, for a married woman her husband is the only Lord whom she should serve diligently and be loyal to. Sita was totally devoted and submitted to her dear husband Lord Ram, and therefore the Lord was obliged to shower all his affection and attention upon her.

The word “*kiṅkarī*” means a maid, but it’s a simple literal meaning. The idea is that Sita would serve her lord Sri Ram as faithfully, honestly, sincerely and diligently as a loyal maid serves her master. So therefore it would be obligatory for the Lord to reciprocate her emotions and reward her for services by being very kind, gracious, forgiving and compassionate towards her, overlooking her shortcomings and mistakes and giving her so much love and affection that she does not miss her parents and family members.

By saying that Sita is loved by all the citizens of Janakpur as much as she is loved by her close family members, mother Sunayana wishes to request Lord Ram that he should

treat her with so much kindness and show public respect and affection for her so that the citizens of Ayodhya begin to respect her and treat her with her with the greatest of dignity and honour.

This request was essential—for it indirectly hinted to Lord Ram that there may arise some instances in life when unfortunately he may be annoyed with Sita for any reason whatsoever, but he should never publicly display his annoyance at her because the subjects of the kingdom would pick a wrong hint and begin to show disrespect to Sita. Instead, the Lord should politely tell her what he didn't like about her so that she can mend her ways.

Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 167-168, and Chanda no. 21 in this context.]

सो०. तुङ्ग परिपूरन काम जान सिरोमनि भावप्रिय ।

जन गुन गाहक राम दोष दलन करुनायतन ॥ ३३६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

tumha paripūrana kāma jāna sirōmani bhāvapriya.
jana guna gāhaka rāma dōṣa dalana karunāyatana. 336.

[Sunayana continues with her prayerful submission—]

‘You are eternally self-contented and fulfilled. [That is, even the smallest service that Sita would render to you would make you happy with her, I am sure of that. You do not have an un-ending train of desires that would be difficult for her to fulfill. In the broader perspective, even the smallest service your devotees render upon you is sufficient to please you.]

You are the most exalted amongst the wise and knowledgable. [I do not intend to preach you or give advice to you because you know more than I can ever advice. But still it is out of affection that I am saying all this. Being the Lord of creation you are also the lord of all knowledge that is present in this creation.]

You are only attracted by positive emotions of affection, love and devotion. [The best way to please you is to have love and devotion for you. You cannot be pleased by material wealth or external pretensions of any kind because you are all-knowing and omniscient, and therefore can't be cheated. It is only the virtue of having positive emotions of affection, love and devotion that sprouts in one's heart that can please you.]

You pay attention to and consider only the good points in your devotees and followers (“Jana”). [That is, you value the good qualities, characters, behaviour and deeds of your devotees, and neglect their shortcomings and faults. This nature of yours makes it possible for you to be always kind with your followers, and never be angry or annoyed with them because you don't pay attention to their shortcomings and misdemeanours.]

You eliminate or eradicate the negative qualities, the weaknesses and the shortcomings in your devotees and followers. [That is, you do not condone their negativities and misdemeanours, but instead of getting irritated and cruelly punishing them you endeavour to initiate measures to improve your devotees and followers so as to bring about a complete transformation in them and help them overcome evil to become noble souls. Therefore I am sure that even if my beloved daughter Sita has any

shortcomings or faults, you will help her to overcome them and become perfect in life, instead of getting angry at her.]

Oh Lord, indeed you are an abode of mercy and compassion. [And therefore I am certain that you will be merciful and compassionate towards Sita.]’ (Sortha/Doha no. 336)

[Note—Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 167-168 and Chanda no. 21 which summarise what has been said in these verses.]

चौ०. अस कहि रही चरन गहि रानी । प्रेम पंक जु गिरा समानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi rahī carana gahi rānī. prēma paṅka janū girā samānī. 1.

Saying so, the queen (i.e. the mother-in-law of Lord Ram, queen-mother Sunayana) remained clinging to the feet of Lord Ram (i.e. she did not get up but remained sitting on the floor, clasping the holy feet of the Lord)¹. It appeared that her voice was lost in the quicksand of love and affection for the Lord². (1)

[Note—¹This verse concludes the narration that commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 336 which essentially says that the queen had fallen at the feet of Lord Ram because she was overwhelmed with love and affection for the Lord when she saw his bewitchingly beautiful form.

We have read in the previous verses, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 336 herein above that the queen-mother had lovingly prayed to Lord Ram and handed over Sita to him. After saying one’s prayer, the worshipper bows at the feet of the deity, or in more mundane terms, the petitioner bows before the master or lord to whom he has submitted his petition in order to express his humility and to impress upon the master or the lord that he, the petitioner, has surrendered himself before the latter and expects graceful consideration of his petition, that his request may please be accepted.

When the petitioner submits himself before the master or the lord by bowing before him or falling at his feet and clasping it, the master or the lord develops a soft feeling for the petitioner and feels morally obliged to reciprocate the gracious gestures of the petitioner by accommodating the latter and honouring his requests as far as it is possible and feasible to do so, at least on compassionate grounds, if nothing else.

In general terms, falling at the feet of someone, touching his feet or bowing before him are gestures of humility that not only express great respect on the part of the petitioner for the master or the lord, but also a high degree of earnestness and expectation with which one has made the request that accompanies these gestures so much so that it becomes difficult for the senior person, before whom the junior has submitted himself, to neglect the request and not oblige the petitioner, no matter what the petition is about.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 165-166.

²Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 336 herein above. Here also we find that the queen had become speechless when she learnt that the grooms and their marriage party were planning to return home to Ayodhya.]

सुनि सनेहसानी बर बानी । बहुबिधि राम सासु सनमानी ॥ २ ॥

sunī sanēhasānī barā bānī. bahubidhi rāma sāsū sanamānī. 2.

Lord Ram realised that the queen had become overwhelmed with emotions when he heard her utter words that were soaked in love and affections. So he reassured her in many ways, honoured her and comforted her. (2)

[Note—The queen-mother's throat was so choked with emotions that she could not perhaps say anything clearly and articulately, except to make some guttural words that may have been incoherent and incomprehensible. But Lord Ram was very wise and he realised what the situation was. He could fathom the pain and grief in the heart of the queen because the time for saying good-bye has arrived, and this meant that the queen-mother would have to suffer the agony of separation from her beloved daughter Sita.

In those days when there were no communication facilities such as the telephone or the mail service as they exist today, once the daughter went away after marriage it meant that her family members would lose contact with her for the rest of her life. So, the queen-mother's heart felt very sad and heavy that the time for saying good-bye to her beloved daughter Sita has finally arrived. Therefore, the queen was overcome with grief and sorrow when she heard that Lord Ram and the rest of the marriage party were leaving—because that meant that Sita would have to go as well. As a mother, this very thought was very painful for her.

Lord Ram realised her dilemma and the sadness of her heart. She could not say “no, don't go”, and at the same time she would have preferred that the Lord as well as Sita continued to stay at Janakpur. No clear, articulately spoken words were needed to explain the situation to him, to tell him how despondent and forlorn the queen-mother was feeling during those moments. So, Lord Ram spoke very affectionately with his mother-in-law, showed her his greatest respect as a reciprocating gesture for her own expression of love and respect for the Lord, and reassured her that her request that Sita be well looked after and given lots of love will be fully honoured and respected. Remember, this is what the queen had wished—refer: Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 336 herein above.

So in essence Lord Ram reassured his mother-in-law that she need not worry at all for Sita and her welfare, and that Sita will be given full respect and honour in her in-law's home as she was being given in her parent's home.]

राम बिदा मागत कर जोरी । कीन्ह प्रनामु बहोरि बहोरी ॥ ३ ॥

पाइ असीस बहुरि सिरु नाई । भाइन्ह सहित चले रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

rāma bidā māgata kara jōrī. kīnha pranāmu bahōri bahōrī. 3.
pā'i asīsa bahuri siru nā'ī. bhā'inha sahita calē raghurā'ī. 4.

Lord Ram joined his palms as a sign of showing respect and bowed repeatedly before his mother-in-law (the queen-mother Sunayana), requesting her to give him (and his other brothers) permission to leave for home (i.e. for Ayodhya). (3)

He received her blessings (as well as permission), and bowed once again before her as he, along with his brothers, finally took leave of her. (4)

[Note—Lord Ram was the eldest of the four brothers, so he spoke on their behalf. It is not that the other brothers did not show gestures of respect by bowing or joining their palms before their mothers-in-law, queen Sunayana and her sister-queen, the consort of

Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of king Janak, but since Lord Ram was the eldest of them it is he who has been named here in these verses to represent all of them.

We have read earlier in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes these verses that Lord Ram had shown his respect to queen Sunayana in various ways when she had brought and handed over Sita to him. Repetition of such gestures is done to lay stress on one's enduring respect and honour for the other person; it is a method to show great and sincere courteousness for the person being honoured.

We have also read in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 336 that Lord Ram had requested the queen to treat him, and by inference all his other brothers, as her son, and therefore always have love for them in her heart. Now verse nos. 3-4 build-up on these emotions and say that not only did the four brothers showed their respects to the queen-mother, their mother-in-law, like they would have shown to their own mother, but she too reciprocated by blessing them abundantly.]

मंजु मधुर मूरति उर आनी । भई सनेह सिथिल सब रानी ॥ ५ ॥

manjū madhura mūrati ura ānī. bha'īm sanēha sithila saba rānī. 5.

All the queens (the chief queen-mother Sunayana, and her sister-queens such as the wife of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of king Janak) watched the charming form of Lord Ram, and as they lovingly enshrined this image in their hearts, they became benumbed and overcome with emotion. (5)

[Note—Lord Ram was so charming and handsome to look at, with such a magnetic personality that anyone who once saw the Lord became mesmerised by him. Earlier we have read that when Sita and other friends of hers had seen Lord Ram in the royal garden of Janakpur, they too were enchanted by the Lord's beauty and charm so much so that Sita had closed her eyes as a subtle gesture of installing the Lord's image in the temple of her heart and closing the door shut so that this image remains present inside for all times to come. For outsiders it appeared that Sita was meditating upon the form of Lord Ram as she stood motionless with her eyes shut, oblivious of her surroundings and the passage of time so much so that the girls who accompanied her became alarmed at her behaviour, and had to cajole her to wake up and finish the worship of goddess Parvati for which she was sent by her mother to the garden temple. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 235.

So there is no wonder now that the queens too were fascinated by the Lord's exceptional charm.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 165.]

पुनि धीरजु धरि कुअँरि हँकारी । बार बार भेटहिं महतारीं ॥ ६ ॥

puni dhīraju dhari ku'am'ri hamkārīm. bāra bāra bhēṭahīm mahatārīm. 6.

Then the queen-mothers recovered themselves and called the princesses (Sita and her sister as well as her cousins—i.e. Urmila, Mandavi and Sukriti respectively), and repeatedly embraced them affectionately (for the last time before their departure with their husbands for their in-law's place). (6)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 21.]

This verse reflects on the narration in Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 334 above that basically say that as soon as the news spread that the marriage party was making preparations to leave for Ayodhya, the queen-mothers called Sita and expressed their enduring love for her, teaching her the customs of the family and the basic norms of behaviour that she should follow at her in-law's place.

Now the time has come to bid the final good-bye, and so the queen-mothers repeatedly embrace Sita and her sisters for one last time. Their hearts were heavy from the pain of separation, but this pain had to be endured because the married princesses had to go away with their grooms.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 102 which tell us how Parvati, the newly wed bride of Lord Shiva, and her mother had repeatedly embraced each other at the time of departure of the marriage party of Lord Shiva.]

पहुँचावहिं फिरि मिलहिं बहोरी । बढी परस्पर प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि पुनि मिलत सखिन्ह बिलगाई । बाल बच्छ जिमि धेनु लवाई ॥ ८ ॥

pahumcāvahiṁ phiri milahiṁ bahōrī. baḥī paraspara prīti na thōrī. 7.
puni puni milata sakhinha bilagāī. bāla baccha jimi dhēnu lavāī. 8.

The mothers escorted them (the grooms and their brides) for some distance, turned back to return, demurred and hesitated (because they could not bear with the pain of separation from their beloved daughters), went back to meet and embrace their daughters again and again, and this continued to happen repeatedly for quite some time. Mutual affection and love for each other went on increasing with each passing moment, and there was no measurement of it. (7)

When the lady friends (of Sita as well as of the queens) saw this happening repeatedly (and they discovered that the queens are finding it extremely difficult to turn back and bid good-bye to the princesses because they were overwhelmed with love and grief of separation), they intervened and politely separated the mothers from their daughters, which was like separating a cow from her young calf. [Just as the cow needs some force to be applied and a lot of cajoling if she is to be separated from her calf which is being taken away by someone to be kept and looked after at his own place, the lady friends used polite force as well as a lot of cajoling and persuasion to separate the grieving mothers from their daughters.] (8)

[Note—A similar situation prevailed when Parvati was married to Lord Shiva. At that time also Parvati's mother had repeatedly embraced her, and during the final moments of separation Parvati had repeatedly turned back to glance at her grieving mother—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 102.]

दो०. प्रेमबिबस नर नारि सब सखिन्ह सहित रनिवासु ।
मानहुँ कीन्ह बिदेहपुर करुनाँ बिरहँ निवासु ॥ ३३७ ॥

dōhā.

prēmabibasa nara nāri saba sakhinha sahita ranivāsu.
mānahum̐ kīnha bidēhapura karunām̐ biraham̐ nivāsu. 337.

During those moments of departure of the princesses with their grooms, all the men and women as well as the friends of the princesses and other members of the female quarters of the royal household became overcome with emotions of love and grief of separation. It appeared that the city of Videhapur (which was another name of Janakpur) was indeed an abode of grief, pain and agony that comes from being separated by one's beloved. (Doha no. 337)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 22.

The word “Videha” literally means a situation when one becomes unaware of the senses of the body. This is a clever play with words by the author Tulsidas. He means that the entire city of Janakpur, the city of king Janak, was so overwhelmed with grief and sorrow of separation that came with the four princesses going away forever with their grooms after their marriage that all the city's inhabitants became numb and unable to think of anything. They moved around as if in a daze, forlorn, remorseful and heavy at heart, unconcerned about their surroundings and their own affairs. The overriding emotion now was one of intense sadness, gloom, despondency and despair which replaced the joyous atmosphere of a few hours back, prior to the declaration that the marriage party was packing up to leave, when the city was full of merriment and rejoicings.

Separation from Lord Ram was a prospect that made anyone who came in contact with him even once, sad, gloomy, distressed and despondent. The citizens of Janakpur had been enjoying interaction with the Lord for quite sometime now, and when the time came that the Lord will have to leave for Ayodhya, the citizens became very sad. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333 above.

This situation was not limited to the citizens of Janakpur, for even the subjects of the Lord's own kingdom loved him so dearly that when the Lord had to go to forest to spend some of his days in exile, the people of the city of Ayodhya too had been dazed into numbness, and had spent their days gloomily, going about their daily chores like a puppet, not taking interest in anything and remaining submerged in the thoughts of the Lord on a perpetual basis—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Doha no. 86.

We find the same situation repeat itself once again in Chitrakoot when Lord Ram persuaded Bharat not to force the Lord to return to Ayodhya but wait patiently till the time of the Lord's forest exile ended in the next 14 years, and Bharat and his party took their leave of the Lord and started on their way back to Ayodhya. All the people were walking like a puppet and were in a state of utter distress and absolute despondency—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 320; (ii) Doha no. 322 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-2.]

चौ०. सुक सारिका जानकी ज्याए । कनक पिंजरन्हि राखि पढ़ाए ॥ १ ॥
व्याकुल कहहिं कहाँ बैदेही । सुनि धीरजु परिहरइ न केही ॥ २ ॥
भए बिकल खग मृग एहि भाँती । मनुज दसा कैसें कहि जाती ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

suka sārīkā jānakī jyā'ē. kanaka pinjaranhi rākhi parhā'ē. 1.
byākula kahahim kahām' baidēhī. suni dhīraju parihara'i na kēhī. 2.
bha'ē bikala khaga mrga ēhi bhām'tī. manuja dasā kaisēm kahi jā'tī. 3.

Sita had affectionately reared a pair of birds, a parrot and a maina bird, whom she had kept in a golden cage and had taught them to speak. When these two birds learnt that Sita was going away, they were extremely perturbed and agonised. [This is because, being caged, they could not do anything, they could fly out and accompany Sita on her journey away from home. The poor birds could only flutter madly inside their cage, utterly distressed and flabbergasted at having to see Sita going away and leaving them alone to forcefully face a bleak future without their patron princess. They did not understand what the reason was, but were hopping madly to be let off so that they can fly along with Sita to wherever she was going.] (1)

The two helpless and hapless birds cried out in dismay—‘Where is the daughter of Videha (i.e. Sita)?’ Their soulful cries were so sad and lamentful that whoever heard them felt extremely despondent and gloomy¹. (2)

Why, when even the birds and animals became so distressed, sad and gloomy at the prospect of having to live without Sita, one cannot imagine the condition of human beings—the immensity of their sadness, distress and despondency, as well as their sense of helplessness. [They were all feeling an utter sense of ‘helplessness’ because a daughter is bound to go away to her husband’s home after marriage, and this is an age-old tradition which cannot be avoided. The citizens and other inhabitants of Janakpur were ‘helpless’ that they cannot make Sita stay with them after marriage though they all wanted it to be so.] (3)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 21, stanza line nos. 3-4.

When we move ahead in our reading of this epic story we shall read that when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had reached the banks of river Ganges on their to the forest and made their charioteer Sumant return back to Ayodhya, a similar situation prevailed because the horses of the chariot neighed agonisingly and cried in grave distress when they were forced to turn back with the chariot after leaving the Lord for his onwards journey into the wild forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

The main idea of these verses is that when animals and birds were so extremely distressed at being forced to separate themselves from Lord Ram and Sita, their loving patrons, one can imagine the pain in the hearts of human beings who are more sensitive and emotional by nature as compared to the birds and animals who are lowly creatures in the hierarchy of evolution.

¹A question arises here—what happened to these birds; were they taken by Sita to her new home at Ayodhya or not? Though it is not expressly mentioned here, but in all probability the answer is ‘yes’, she did. This is because we read a little later that her father king Janak had sent all her favourite attendants, both males and females, along with her at the time of her departure for Ayodhya with the marriage party—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 339. Hence it is easy to deduce that the king had also gifted these two birds to Sita because she had fondly raised them herself.]

बंधु समेत जनकु तब आए । प्रेम उमगि लोचन जल छाए ॥ ४ ॥

bandhu samēta janaku taba ā'ē. prēma umagi lōcana jala chā'ē. 4.

Then (i.e. when the four brothers had left the female quarters of the royal palace, accompanied by their respective brides), king Janak came alongside his brother (Kushdhwaj).

When he saw them (Lord Ram and Sita especially), love and affection surged in his heart and tears filled his eyes. (4)

[Note—It is important to note that Janak was a highly enlightened and self-realised king of his time. Remember: When he had first seen Lord Ram at the time of sage Vishwamitra's arrival at Janakpur, at that time too Janak's heart had melted at the sight of the Lord and he had acknowledged this fact openly when he asked the sage the reason why this has happened because he was a hermit at heart and not easily moved by anyone's charm. So therefore he argued that there must be something special with Lord Ram and he was sure that the Lord was not a mere human prince as he appears to be for others—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

Janak was not moved by worldly charms as he was immune to delusions and grosser aspects of the eclectic virtue of 'beauty'. It was the divinity of Lord Ram that evoked such strong emotions of love in him as to make his eyes get filled with tears and his body become thrilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 286.]

सीय बिलोकि धीरता भागी । रहे कहावत परम बिरागी ॥ ५ ॥

लीन्हि रायँ उर लाइ जानकी । मिटी महामरजाद ग्यान की ॥ ६ ॥

siya bilōki dhīratā bhāgī. rahē kahāvata parama birāgī. 5.

līnhi rāyam'ura lā'i jānakī. miṭī mahāmarajāda gyāna kī. 6.

[But the Lord's "Maya", or his powers of enchanting is so great and powerful that even the otherwise neutral and dispassionate king Janak became a victim of emotions of sadness and grief at the separation from his daughter Sita as narrated in these four verses, nos. 5-8. For some fleeting moments he forgot who he was, and who Sita really was—i.e. that he was a hermit-king immune to worldly relations, and that Sita was a personified form of goddess Laxmi who had simply come to his home to oblige him. No one is anyone's father, and no one is anybody's daughter!]

When Janak saw Sita, his famed patience abandoned him and he forgot about his reputation of being self-restrained and a controller of emotions. He forgot for once about his vows of renunciation, that he is renowned for his sense of detachment and dispassion, because at this moment (when he saw and met Sita) emotions held the better of him and took him virtually a hostage. (5)

Janak affectionately embraced Janki (Sita, his daughter), and for some moments his mind and wisdom took leave of him, leaving him sentimental and submerged in

emotions of love and affections that in turn created a sense of agony of separation in his heart because his dearest daughter Sita would now go away far from him. (6)

[Note—Janak was a wise and enlightened king, and he knew very well that a daughter is bound to go away from her parent's home after marriage. He should be rather happy that she has found such a brilliant and glorious groom, and this was a happy occasion when the bride was being escorted to her husband's home, not a moment to lament or grieve.

In other words, ideally speaking, there was no reason why Janak should weep and lament, but this is the irony of life and a showcase of the stupendity of the Lord's "Maya" that compels even the highly wise and enlightened of men, such as Janak in this case, to lose his patience, wisdom and powers of reasoning for sometime and act like an ordinary man who is indulgent in the gross world, who gets trapped in and jostled by its numerous tugs and pulls, is buffeted by its countless attractions and charms, its sorrows and joys, and so on.

So, for once, Janak behaved like an ordinary man—when he saw Sita, he lost control over himself, became emotional, and affectionately embraced her as grief of separation overtook him.

A similar situation has prevailed at Chitrakoot when Janak met Sita in the attire of a forest-dwelling hermitress—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 286.]

समुझावत सब सचिव सयाने । कीन्ह बिचारु न अवसर जाने ॥ ७ ॥
बारहिं बार सुता उर लाई । सजि सुंदर पालकीं मगाई ॥ ८ ॥

samujhāvata saba saciva sayānē. kīnha bicāru na avasara jānē. 7.
bārahīm bāra sutā ura lā'īm. saji sundara pālakīm magā'īm. 8.

All the wise ministers and advisors of the king consoled him and gave him wise council. The king then realised that it was not the opportunity to wail and lament, and so he recovered himself and restrained his emotions¹. (7)

He repeatedly embraced his daughter and clasped her to his heart. Then he called for a beautiful palanquins² that had been already well-equipped and decked up for the occasion. [It was in these palanquins that the four brides would be sent-off to their in-law's place.] (8)

[Note—¹It is a duty of a king's ministers and senior advisors to give him wise council when he becomes emotionally upset, and is unable to apply his mind. People were watching Janak very closely, and his becoming sentimental beyond a reasonable limit was not consistent with his reputation as a self-controlled, prudent, dispassionate and wise king who is immune to personal emotions and sentiments. It will send a wrong signal to his subjects that he was a sentimental king who is prone to be driven by his emotions rather than being practical and objective in a given situation. He will be regarded as being weak and emotionally malleable rather than being strong-willed, objective and self-restrained. So it would be judicious now on his part to overcome his emotions and show exemplary neutrality and objectiveness that behoves of a great king who sits in judgement over the fate of others. Say, how would he react when he sits on the judgement throne in his royal court and a case involving family matters comes before him for decision?

Janak must realize that if he starts wailing and grieving himself, it would have an extremely negative effect on Sita who would also start to weep and lament. After all, she

has to go away to her husband's home, and so it is wiser to see her off with a smile and laughter instead of in an atmosphere of gloom and grief. It is this last moment which Sita would remember for a long time to come, so it is prudent to make it joyful, cheerful, and worth remembering so that she leaves Janakpur and her parent's home with lovely memories of joy and happiness, with the faces of smiling parents etched in her memory rather than a picture of distressed and weeping parents which would add to her own distress and agony of separation from which she must be already suffering. It is the duty of her wise father to alleviate her emotional suffering instead of adding to it.

After all, this was an auspicious moment, a moment for which any father waits because it is the time his daughter is going away to her chosen groom's home with all the pomp and ceremony that accompany such occasions. It was not a moment to grieve but to celebrate.

²There are four brides—Sita, Mandavi, Sutkriti and Urmila. So, four palanquins were brought in, one for each bride.]

दो०. प्रेमबिबस परिवारु सबु जानि सुलगन नरेस ।
कुअँरि चढ़ाई पालकिन्ह सुमिरे सिद्धि गनेस ॥ ३३८ ॥

dōhā.

prēmabibasa parivāru sabu jāni sulagana narēsa.
ku'am̐ri caṛhā'īm pālakinha sumirē sid'dhi ganēsa. 338.

The entire royal family was overcome with affection for the daughters (Sita and her sisters). When the king realized that the auspicious moment has arrived, when all the stars and signs of the zodiac were in the right place in the horoscope, he invoked Lord Ganesh and his divine consort named Siddhi as he helped the princesses to get on the palanquins. (Doha no. 338)

[Note—Lord Ganesh is invoked when one embarks on a long journey or starts a new venture. When Lord Ram started for the forest from Ayodhya, he too had done the same—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.

We shall read below that when the marriage party made its final departure from Janakpur, king Dasrath has invoked and worshipped Lord Ganesh—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 339.

Refer also to Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1 of Baal Kand in Ram Charit Manas.]

चौ०. बहुबिधि भूप सुता समुझाई । नारिधरमु कुलरीति सिखाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

bahubidhi bhūpa sutā samujhā'īm. nāridharamu kularīti sikhā'īm. 1.

At the final moments of farewell, the king advised his daughter(s) the basic principles of behaviour that govern a married woman's life as well as her duties as a housewife, the traditions of the family, and the customs of royalty. (1)

[Note—Earlier we have read that the queen-mother as well as the friends of Sita had also given such advice to her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 334.]

दासीं दास दिए बहुतेरे । सुचि सेवक जे प्रिय सिय केरे ॥ २ ॥

dāsīṁ dāsa di'ē bahutērē. suci sēvaka jē priya siya kērē. 2.

Janak sent with Sita, as marriage gift to her, countless male and female aides, servants and attendants whom she had always liked and was fond of their company. (2)

[Note—Refer also to Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that describe the lavish marriage gifts which Janak sent in advance to Ayodhya. Now he sent Sita's close attendants and servants. This practice was to ensure that the bride did not feel lonely and homesick in an alien environment in her new home at the in-law's place which would be a foreign country with a new culture for her. When Sita was accompanied by her old trusted servants and maids she would have familiar faces all around her, and they would be at her beck and call to give her company and solace should she ever feel homesick, forlorn and sad.]

Besides this, the custom of sending local well-known people with the bride was to ensure that she was comfortable and safe in her new home, for god forbid if anything goes wrong then these close confidantes of the bride's parents would inform them by some means about the unhappy developments, and remedial steps can be forthwith initiated before the situation goes out of hand.]

सीय चलत ब्याकुल पुरबासी । होहिं सगुन सुभ मंगल रासी ॥ ३ ॥

siya calata byākula purabāsī. hōhīṁ saguna subha maṅgala rāsī. 3.

As Sita proceeded forward for her in-law's place, all the citizens of Janakpur were overwhelmed with grief and felt wretched and miserable.

Meanwhile, all the auspicious signs and good omens manifested themselves during those moments as if to shower their blessings upon her. (3)

[Note—Compare the time when the marriage procession of Lord Ram had started from Ayodhya; at that time also all the good omens and auspicious signs had revealed themselves in great numbers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 303 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

भूसुर सचिव समेत समाजा । संग चले पहुँचावन राजा ॥ ४ ॥

bhūsura saciva samēta samājā. saṅga calē pahumcāvana rājā. 4.

Accompanied by Brahmins (“bhūṣura”), ministers and other senior members of the society and the royal court, the king followed his daughters to escort them for some distance. (4)

[Note—When sage Vishwamitra had come to visit Janakpur, at that time too Janak had taken along Brahmins, ministers and other seniors of the society when he went to meet the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no.170.]

समय बिलोकि बाजने बाजे । रथ गज बाजि बरातिन्ह साजे ॥ ५ ॥

samaya bilōki bājanē bājē. ratha gaja bāji barātinha sājē. 5.

The marriage party was ready for departure but was waiting for Lord Ram and his brothers, who had gone to meet their mothers-in-law and seek their permission to return home along with their respective brides, to come back.

So, as soon as the news arrived that the brides are coming, and Janak is accompanying them to finally see them off, musical instruments began playing at the place where the marriage party was lodged as the chariots, elephants and horses were readied for departure. (5)

दसरथ बिप्र बोलि सब लीन्हे । दान मान परिपूरन कीन्हे ॥ ६ ॥

चरन सरोज धूरि धरि सीसा । मुदित महीपति पाइ असीसा ॥ ७ ॥

dasaratha bipra bōli saba līnhē. dāna māna paripūrana kīnhē. 6.

carana sarōja dhūri dhari sīsā. mudita mahīpati pā'i asīsā. 7.

King Dasrath summoned all the Brahmins of Janakpur, duly honoured them and gave them liberal largesse so much so that all of them were contented¹. (6)

The king placed his head on the dust of their feet as a sign of showing great respect to them (the Brahmins), and he felt delighted when they all blessed him profusely. (7)

[Note—¹This answers the question: What happened to the countless gifts that Janak had given to Dasrath on two occasions—once when Dasrath had arrived at Janakpur (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 306), and the second time after the marriage rituals were over (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 326).

Though Dasrath had given away these gifts liberally on the spot to all those who came to bless him or seek gifts from him as mementos, but the quantity of gifts was so huge that much was left over. Hence, Dasrath gave everything back at the time of departure for Ayodhya by way of donating them to the Brahmins.

In other words, only those things that were directly sent by Janak to Ayodhya (as narrated from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334) had reached Ayodhya, while all the rest were given away by Dasrath to local Brahmins and other seekers in Janakpur itself.]

सुमिरि गजाननु कीन्ह पयाना । मंगलमूल सगुन भए नाना ॥ ८ ॥

sumiri gajānanu kīnha payānā. maṅgalamūla saguna bha'e nānā. 8.

Invoking Lord Ganesh (“gajānanu”), the king finally proceeded for his kingdom of Ayodhya¹. At that time, all the good omens and various types of auspicious signs appeared so as to mark this happy occasion². (8)

[Note—¹As has been said earlier in Doha no. 338 herein above, Lord Ganesh is worshipped when one embarks on a journey.

²We have read earlier that when the marriage party had started from Ayodhya, all the good omens had similarly appeared at that time also to celebrate the moment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 303 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

दो०. सुर प्रसून बरषहिं हरषि करहिं अपछरा गान ।
चले अवधपति अवधपुर मुदित बजाइ निसान ॥ ३३९ ॥

dōhā.

sura prasūna baraṣahīṁ haraṣi karaḥiṁ apacharā gāna.
calē avadhapati avadhapura mudita bajā'i nisāna. 339.

The ecstatic gods rained flowers cheerfully from the heaven even as the celestial nymphs danced in merriment as the king of Ayodhya delightfully proceeded towards his capital city to the accompaniment of music of the kettle-drums. (339)

[Note—The marriage procession was kept ready at the time Lord Ram and his brothers had gone to the royal palace of king Janak to seek permission to leave and bring their brides along. Then we read that king Janak had himself accompanied the brothers and their brides as they moved out of the palace. The group reached the place where king Dasrath had been lodged. Since everything was ready for departure and preparations were complete for the journey, so as soon as the palanquins carrying the brides arrived the marriage party started off on its return journey to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. नृप करि बिनय महाजन फेरे । सादर सकल मागने टेरे ॥ १ ॥
भूषन बसन बाजि गज दीन्हे । प्रेम पोषि ठाढ़े सब कीन्हे ॥ २ ॥
बार बार बिरिदावलि भाषी । फिरे सकल रामहि उर राखी ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

nr̥pa kari binaya mahājana phērē. sādara sakala māganē ṭērē. 1.
bhūṣana basana bāji gaja dīnhē. prēma pōṣi ṭhārḥē saba kīnhē. 2.
bāra bāra biridāvali bhāṣī. phirē sakala rāmahi ura rākhī. 3.

The king (Dasrath) politely persuaded the respectable citizens of Janakpur (known as the “Mahaajans”, a term including the members of the aristocracy as well as the business families) to return home (because they had already come quite a distance to see the king off, and now they must go back).

Then he respectfully called all the alms-seekers [1], and when they had assembled and stood affectionately before him, the king bestowed upon them liberal largesse of ornaments, clothes, horses and elephants. (2)

These alms-seekers were fully contented and they repeatedly praised the king and his royal lineage, lauding their glory and honour unanimously. Then they all returned homewards, enshrining Lord Ram in their hearts. (3)

[Note—King Janak and senior citizens of Janakpur such as the Brahmins and the members of the royalty and the aristocratic class, as well as the bards, the minstrels and the alms-seekers—all had gone a long distance to see-off the marriage party. Perhaps they had gone to the outskirts of the city, or even further on. This was a massive display of affection and courtesousness on part of the people of Janakpur. But at a point of time, king Dasrath had to send them back, so he halted the procession and politely pleaded with them to return back to their city.

As for the gifts, such as ornaments, clothes, horses and elephants, these were the ones that were either left-overs from what Dasrath had given away before his departure from Janakpur (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 339), or the ones that Janak had sent as gifts in advance of Dasrath’s departure (refer: Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8).

Another point to note here is that Lord Ram is the focal point of attention and adoration for all the citizens, here as well as on all earlier occasions. The phrase “enshrining Lord Ram in their hearts” means that the Lord’s beautiful image got permanently etched in the hearts of the citizens and they would remember the Lord for the rest of their lives. For all practical purposes, they began worshipping the image of the Lord in a subtle manner inside the shrine of their hearts by remembering him and remaining submerged in his thoughts for the rest of their lives.]

बहुरि बहुरि कोसलपति कहहीं । जनकु प्रेमबस फिरै न चहहीं ॥ ४ ॥
पुनि कह भूपति बचन सुहाए । फिरिअ महीस दूरि बड़ि आए ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri bahuri kōsalapati kahahīm. janaku prēmabasa phirai na cahahīm. 4.
puni kaha bhūpati bacana suhā'ē. phiri'a mahīsa dūri baḍi ā'ē. 5.

The lord (king) of Kaushal (the kingdom of Ayodhya) repeatedly asked king Janak to return, but the latter did not want to go back out of his emotions of (brotherly; friendly) affection for the former.

[Just as two loving brothers or two dearest friends find it difficult to part with each other, Janak found it emotionally heavy on his part to bear with the burden of grief that accompanied the prospect of separation from Dasrath whom he had begun to respect and treat as a dear friend and a brotherly king by now. The two kings had forged an enduring bond of love and mutual respect for each other by this time.] (4)

The king (Dasrath) once again said to king Janak, ‘Oh revered king, please go back now for you have already come a very long distance.’ (5)

[Note—A while back we have read that Dasrath managed to persuade the senior citizens and other noble men to return home. But king Janak continued to move ahead with the marriage procession for a very long distance from the city of Janakpur as he was reluctant to return and wished to see-off the marriage party at the kingdom's boarder. So in all probabilities, Janak had gone to the outer fringes of his kingdom when Dasrath insisted that it was enough and now he must go back.

Another interesting deduction is that Janak had come such a long distance not due to any formal obligation to do so, but due to his affection for and friendship with Dasrath—this is clear in verse no. 4 which says that Janak was reluctant to return out of his affection (“prēmabasa”) for Dasrath.]

राउ बहोरि उतरि भए ठाढ़े । प्रेम प्रबाह बिलोचन बाढ़े ॥ ६ ॥

तब बिदेह बोले कर जोरी । बचन सनेह सुधाँ जनु बोरी ॥ ७ ॥

करौँ कवन बिधि बिनय बनाई । महाराज मोहि दीन्हि बड़ाई ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u bahōri utari bha'e ṭhāṛhē. prēma prabāha bilōcana bāṛhē. 6.

taba bidēha bōlē kara jōrī. bacana sanēha sudhām'janu bōrī. 7.

karaum kavana bidhi binaya banā'ī. mahārāja mōhi dīnhi baṛā'ī. 8.

When Dasrath found that Janak was very reluctant to return to the city of Janakpur and would continue to move ahead with the marriage procession if he was not stopped, he (Dasrath) stepped down from his chariot and stood on the ground. Mutual love and affection for each other surged in the hearts of both the kings as they became highly emotional and their eyes were filled with tears. (6)

Then Videha (king Janak) brought his palms together as a token of high respect for Dasrath as he politely spoke words that seemed to be soaked in the nectar of love and affection—(7)

‘Oh great king (Dasrath)! How can I pray to you or show my respect and thanks to you in adequate terms? You have graciously given me great honour, for which I am extremely obliged and grateful to you.

[Oh great king! Words fail to express my emotions and sense of gratefulness and thanks for you, but nevertheless I hope you understand what is in my heart irrespective of my inability to express myself properly. I don't wish to part with you, but of course I understand as much as you do that this is not feasible. You have to go to your own kingdom, and so would I have to. But this moment of parting is a great burden on my heart, and I know it to be the same with you. But however, since we have to separate now and go our own ways in life, I wish to once again reiterate my deep respect and affection as well as allegiance for you. I am extremely grateful to you that you took the trouble to come all the way from Ayodhya to my humble kingdom to oblige me, and I feel highly honoured by this gesture of yours. You are a great king, and to have you as a family relation now that your honourable sons have married my daughters is a rare privilege that has enhanced my own stature in this world. I find myself lost for words to sufficiently express my gratitude and thanks for you.]’ (8)

दे०। कोसलपति समधी सजन सनमाने सब भाँति ।

मिलनि परसपर बिनय अति प्रीति न हृदयँ समाति ॥ ३४० ॥

dōhā.

kōsalapati samadhī sajana sanamānē saba bhām̐ti.
milani parasapara binaya ati prīti na hṛdayam̐ samāti. 340.

Moved by the humility and affection of the father of the bride and his new relative by the virtue of this relationship (i.e. king Janak), the king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) duly honoured and showed his respects to him in a variety of ways.

They embraced each other most endearingly, prayed to each other with the greatest of humility, and the mutual sense of love and affection between them was so great that their hearts could not contain this sentiment as they became overwhelmed with surging emotions. (Doha no. 340)

चौ०. मुनि मंडलिहि जनक सिरु नावा । आसिरबादु सबहि सन पावा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

muni maṇḍalihi janaka siru nāvā. āsirabādu sabahi sana pāvā. 1.

King Janak bowed his head before the group of sages (who were accompanying king Dasrath, such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and the rest), and received blessings from all of them. (1)

[Note—This indicates that when both the kings, Janak as well as Dasrath, moved out of their places, they were always accompanied by elders, Brahmins and sages present in the kingdom. We have had many occasions to read about this. For instance, when Dasrath headed for the venue of the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram at Janakpur, he first sought permission from his guru sage Vasistha, and then moved out with a group of sages and saintly people accompanying him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 315.

We also read that the honourable Brahmins of Ayodhya had come with the marriage party—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 300.

Though the word “Muni” technically does not refer to a Brahmin, but for all practical purposes here it covers all pious people who were accompanying Dasrath to whom Janak had paid his due respects.

Earlier we have read that when Janak had gone out to meet and welcome sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at his kingdom with Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman, he too was accompanied by a large retinue of sages, Brahmins and elders of the kingdom—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313.

To receive blessings from sages and elderly Brahmins is a good thing as reiterated elsewhere also. Whenever a chance came to pay obeisance to the Brahmins and sages,

and the latter blessed the king, he felt delighted. For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 331; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 339.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 174 also.]

सादर पुनि भेंटे जामाता । रूप सील गुन निधि सब भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

sādara puni bhēṇṭē jāmātā. rūpa sīla guna nidhi saba bhrātā. 2.

Then Janak affectionately and respectfully met all his sons-in-law (Lord Ram and his other three brothers) who were all treasuries of such eclectic qualities as beauty, charm, good manners, courteousness, and all other excellent virtues. [That is, all the four brothers were equally charming, virtuous and glorious.] (2)

[Note—This observation that Janak met “all his sons-in-law who were equally virtuous and charming” assumes importance in the context of the general way Lord Ram has been honoured throughout the narration as being exemplarily beautiful, charming and virtuous. It simply means that the Lord has been singled out for honour only for the purpose of narration, and he represented all his other brothers when he was praised by someone.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 175--176 also.]

जोरि पंकरुह पानि सुहाए । बोले बचन प्रेम जनु जाए ॥ ३ ॥

राम करौं केहि भाँति प्रसंसा । मुनि महेस मन मानस हंसा ॥ ४ ॥

jōri paṅkaruha pāni suhā'ē. bōlē bacana prēma janu jā'ē. 3.

rāma karauṁ kēhi bhāmṭi prasansā. muni mahēsa mana mānasa hansā. 4.

[King Janak showed his spiritual trait when paying his homage to Lord Ram whom he did not praise as his son-in-law but as the Lord of the world who is adored even by great ascetics as well as their patron god, Lord Shiva who is the third god of the Trinity; the Lord who has a cosmic presence as Brahm, the all-pervading super Consciousness and the Supreme Being in creation.]

Janak joined his palms as a token of great respect and also as if he was offering two lotuses to honour Lord Ram, and then he said words that appeared to have been born out of his love for the Lord. [That is, when Janak spoke, his words were soaked in affection for Lord Ram, were sincerely imbued with love, and were spoken from his heart.]

Janak said—(3)

‘Oh Ram! Say, how can I sufficiently praise and honour you. You live like a majestic Swan in the lake-like hearts of sages and Lord Shiva. [That is, just like a swan lives in the placid and clean waters of a serene lake, floating on its surface and giving majesty and beauty to the charm of the lake, you constantly dwell in the hearts of sages and Lord Shiva who constantly meditate upon you and remain submerged in your thoughts.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan had offered his prayers to Lord Ram.

Lord Shiva has also reiterated this fact that Lord Ram lives like a majestic Swan in the lake-like heart of sages—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

करहिं जोग जोगी जेहि लागी । कोहु मोहु ममता महु त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥

karahim jōga jōgī jēhi lāgī. kōhu mōhu mamatā madu tyāgī. 5.

You are the one for whose sake great ascetics undertake so many spiritual practices such as doing contemplation and meditation (“Yoga”) after having conquered all sorts of worldly taints such as anger and wrathfulness, attachments and infatuations, arrogance and ego (that are hurdles in one’s spiritual pursuit). [The ascetic meditates and contemplates on the ‘self’ which is pure conscious soul. Therefore, Janak means that Lord is the ‘soul’ and ‘life’ of creation; the Lord is a personified form of the supreme Consciousness that lives in the heart of all living beings as their true ‘self’.]¹ (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10 where the vulture Jatau has also reiterated the same thing.

Sage Sutikshan had told Lord Ram while offering his prayers to the Lord that vices such as anger, greed, desires, attachments, arrogance and ego cannot survive wherever Lord Ram lives, and his holy and divine name is chanted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 and 15 that precede Doha no. 11.

A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva when he came to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram at the end of the war at Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14.

When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 186.]

व्यापकु ब्रह्म अलखु अबिनासी । चिदानंदु निरगुन गुनरासी ॥ ६ ॥

byāpaku brahmu alakhu abināsī. cidānandu niraguna gunarāsī. 6.

Indeed, you are Brahm, the cosmic supreme Consciousness that is immanent, all-pervading, all-encompassing (‘Vyaapak’), invisible (‘Alakha’), imperishable (as it is eternal—‘Abinashi’), eternally blissful (‘Chidaanand’), without attributes and forms (‘Nirguna’), and a treasury of all the goodness and virtuousness that exist in this creation (‘Guna-raasi’). (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12, and 17 that precede Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan has prayed to Lord Ram.

Refer also to the prayers of Lord Brahma, the creator, at the time when the war ends in Lanka and Lord stood victorious in the battle-field—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 7, 9 and 15 that precede Doha no. 111.

Even the Vedas themselves have lauded Lord Ram as a personification of Brahm—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 13.

When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—that the Lord is

all-pervading and immanent in creation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 186.]

मन समेत जेहि जान न बानी । तरकि न सकहिं सकल अनुमानी ॥ ७ ॥

mana samēta jēhi jāna na bānī. taraki na sakahim sakala anumānī. 7.

You are so mysterious and mystical that neither the Mana (mind and heart) nor the faculty of speech can ever know about you. You are beyond all logics and arguments that one can ever imagine of.

[That is, it is useless to try to debate about you and either attempt to prove your existence or disapprove of it based on worldly logic and arguments that one usually applies to other grosser things. Similarly, words are incapable and insufficient to describe even a fraction of truth about you no matter how hard one tries and how much learned he may be. That is why of course the wise ascetic prefers to keep aloof from such attempts of debating and arguing about you or trying to find the truth of you by listening to others and preaching it to others—for the best way to learn about you is by ‘self-realisation’ that comes with meditation and contemplation upon the truthful ‘self’ which is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the soul of all living beings.] (7)

[Note—When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—that the Lord is beyond the reach of speech and understanding by words. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3 and 12 that precede Doha no. 186.]

महिमा निगमु नेति कहि कहई । जो तिहुँ काल एकरस रहई ॥ ८ ॥

mahimā nigamu nēti kahi kahaī. jō tihum̐ kāla ēkarasa rahaī. 8.

Verily, your glories and virtues are so immense and profound that the scriptures (‘Nigam’) only say a part of them, finally concluding that it is not enough¹.

You maintain your evenness and equanimity, and remain the same (because you are eternal and unchanging) in all the three phases of time and eras². [That is, though the world is ever changing, you remain constant and unchanging. You are the only factor that remains steady in the otherwise ever-changing face of the sand dune of time. In other words, you are the only ‘Absolute Truth’ that does not change with the passage of time.] (8)

[Note—¹When mother Kaushalya had prayed to Lord Ram at the time of the Lord’s manifestation as a human being, she has also said that even the Vedas and other scriptures are unable to know the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 192.

²The three phases of time and era are the past, the present and the future.

It ought to be noted carefully that the characteristics noted in these verses are unique for Brahm, a term used to refer to the Supreme Being.]

दो०. नयन बिषय मो कहूँ भयउ सो समस्त सुख मूल ।

सबइ लाभु जग जीव कहँ भएँ ईसु अनुकूल ॥ ३४१ ॥

dōhā.

nayana biṣaya mō kahum' bhaya'u sō samasta sukha mūla.
saba'i lābhu jaga jīva kaham' bha'ēm' īsu anukūla. 341.

I am so extremely lucky that the same root of all bliss, joy and happiness has appeared before my eyes so that I can see these virtues personified right in front of me.

Every good thing and all the best of fruits become easily accessible for a creature when the gods become pleased with him and benevolent upon him. [That is, I feel that the gods have been very kind towards me because they have made it possible for me to see the Supreme Being who is otherwise 'invisible and beyond understanding'. This is the best 'fruit' or reward that a living being can ever hope to acquire or get by doing meritorious deeds in his life.] (Doha no. 341)

चौ०. सबहि भाँति मोहि दीन्हि बड़ाई । निज जन जानि लीन्ह अपनाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sabahi bhām'ti mōhi dīnhi baṛā'ī. nija jana jāni līnha apanā'ī. 1.

You have honoured me and given me importance in all possible ways, and you have also accepted me as one of your own devotees¹. [And for this I am very grateful to you.] (1)

[Note—¹We have to understand the text in the proper context and perspective. This is a devotional rendering of the story of Lord Ram, and not merely a historical narration. A word has many connotations and therefore should be interpreted according to the context in which it is used. The words "Nija Jana" literally mean "one's kin and close associate; a person very close to someone; a member of an extended family". King Janak meant was that since he has realised that Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince but a manifested form of Brahm, the cosmic Lord of creation and the Supreme Being in a personified form as is absolutely clear in the preceding verses, he regards himself as being very privileged and feels honoured that the Lord chose to become his son-in-law just like the case of the Lord obliging king Dasrath by becoming his son. It's a rare privilege and the best of honours one can get in this world. Therefore, Janak requests the Lord to treat him at par with his own father Dasrath.

Janak treats himself as the Lord's devotee and not merely as a father-in-law. This is in sharp contrast to Dasrath who had been so overcome by the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) that he had forgotten who actually Lord Ram was, and hence had begun to regard the Lord as being merely as his 'son'. Thus, Dasrath had fallen short of the high spiritual stature achieved by Janak as the former had failed to regard himself as the Lord's "devotee" with the same fervour as had Janak. This is evident when Dasrath died from the grief of Lord Ram's separation when the Lord was sent to exile due to family intrigue. We will read that at the time of his death, Dasrath had repeatedly uttered Lord Ram's holy name "RAM" (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along

with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8)—a name that is the best and the most refined spiritual formula for one's Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28)—but still he did not get salvation but became a ghost, and lived in a 'spirit' form. The proof lies in the fact that at the end of the war of Lanka, the spirit or ghost of Dasrath had come to the battle-field to bless Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 112.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that from the spiritual perspective, Janak was more enlightened and realised than was Dasrath. Nevertheless, Janak had shown great respect for Dasrath (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 340)—because Dasrath was more fortunate and had done more meritorious deeds in the past that the Lord had decided to oblige him and fulfill his wishes by becoming his son, while Janak had to be contented by being merely the Lord's 'father-in-law', a relationship that is not as close as that of being one's father.]

होहिं सहस दस सारद सेषा । करहिं कलप कोटिक भरि लेखा ॥ २ ॥

मोर भाग्य राउर गुन गाथा । कहि न सिराहिं सुनहु रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥

hōhiṁ sahasa dasa sārada sēṣā. karahiṁ kalapa kōṭika bhari lēkhā. 2.
mōra bhāgya rā'ura guna gāthā. kahi na sirāhiṁ sunahu raghunāthā. 3.

If there were ten thousand Sardas (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of speech and knowledge) and an equal number of Seshas (the thousand tongued celestial serpent), and they were to simultaneously count my luck as well as your glories and virtues for millions of Kalpas (eras; a long period of time) [2], verily I say to you oh Raghunath (the lord of king Raghu's race) that still they won't be able to do it. [That is, both my good luck as well as your glories and virtues are endless.] [3] (2-3)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 215 in this context which also cites these two—goddess Sarda and Seshnath—being unable to describe the beauty and glory of Lord Ram.]

मैं कछु कहउँ एक बल मोरें । तुझ रीझहु सनेह सुठि थोरें ॥ ४ ॥

maiṁ kachu kaha'um'ēka bala mōrēm. tumha rījhahu sanēha suṭhi thōrēm. 4.

Oh Lord, I have gathered courage to be bold enough to say what I have said because of my conviction that you are easily pleased with even the slightest expression of devotion and love that one has for you. [And that is why I have taken the liberty not only to praise you so much but also to praise my own good fortunes that I have been able to acquire by the virtue of my association with you.] (4)

बार बार मागउँ कर जोरें । मनु परिहरै चरन जनि भोरें ॥ ५ ॥

bāra bāra māga'um̐ kara jōrēm̐. manu pariharai carana jani bhōrēm̐. 5.

Now therefore oh exalted Lord, I repeatedly beg of you and pray to you by joining both my palms as a token of my humble submission before you and also as a sign of earnestness of my words that let my Mana (mind and heart) never forget its devotion for your holy feet, let my Mana ever remain tied to your holy feet, let my Mana remember your holy feet for the rest of my life!' (5)

[Note—(i) The greatest compliment to the glory of Lord Ram's holy feet comes from the Lord's own guru, sage Vasistha, who was not only the Lord's moral preceptor and a priest of the royal family but also a son of the creator Brahma. In other words, Vasistha was exceptionally exalted and a very senior person. He had prayed to Lord Ram in the same way as Janak has done here: Vasistha requests Lord Ram that he bless the former that for all future generations he (Vasistha) may have unstinted devotion for the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48.

Even Sita has made the same request in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 259.

All the devotees of Lord Ram have sought this blessing. For instance, Ahilya had done so in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 11-14 that precede Doha no. 211; the vulture Jatau had done so as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30.

When Lord Ram asked the learned sage Valmiki to list the places where he can live, the sage has said that “the Lord should live in the Mana (heart and mind; the inner-self) of anyone who worships the Lord's feet regularly and feels that he has undertaken a voyage to a holy pilgrim place when he worships the Lord's feet” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 129); and “the Lord should live in the inner-self of those who request that they should have devotion for the holy feet of the Lord as a reward for all the good and meritorious deeds they do” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129).

We read at many places in this wonderful story of devotion for Lord Ram that whenever a devotee met the Lord, he or she has fallen at the Lord's feet as the best sign of submission and showing his respect for the Lord. For instance, when sage Sutikshan had met Lord Ram, this is exactly what he did—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 20-21 that precede Doha no. 10. Further on we find Sabari, the old lady hermit, falling at the feet of the Lord when he visited her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 34.

Later on in the story we find that when Lord Ram had first met his monkey friends, Hanuman and Sugriv, they too had shown their respects to the Lord by falling at his holy feet, as does Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, who had come to take refuge with the Lord upon being cast out of the kingdom by his brother. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2 with respect to Hanuman; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 4 with respect to Sugriv; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46 with respect to Vibhishan.

(ii) Every devotee knows that the Lord will fulfill his wishes as this is the wont and natural habit of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 28 Ka and its preceding Chaupai line no. 11.]

सुनि बर बचन प्रेम जनु पोषे । पूरनकाम रामु परितोषे ॥ ६ ॥

sunī bara bacana prēma janu pōṣē. pūranakāma rāmu paritōṣē. 6.

When Lord Ram heard these pleasant, polite and courteous words of Janak, words that were soaked in emotions of love and sincere affection for the Lord, he (Lord Ram) who was always contented, felt obliged and happy.

[In other words, though Lord Ram did not need any praises from someone to make him happy by highlighting the Lord's glories and virtues because he was eternally fulfilled, contented and blissful, but still when king Janak praised him he felt obliged towards him by way of saying 'thank you very much'. Lord Ram was grateful to Janak for being so extremely courteous and polite to him.] (6)

करि बर बिनय ससुर सनमाने । पितु कौसिक बसिष्ठ सम जाने ॥ ७ ॥

kari bara binaya sasura sanamānē. pitu kausika basiṣṭha sama jānē. 7.

Lord Ram reciprocated his father-in-law's (Janak's) polite gestures by showing the same respect to him, and expressing his gratitude to him by treating him at par with his own father (Dasrath), sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and sage Vasistha (the Lord's guru—moral preceptor and priest of the family).

[The three gentlemen named here were the senior most members present on the occasion. Lord Ram paid his sincere respects to king Janak in the same way as he would have paid to all of these three gentlemen.] (7)

[Note—Lord Ram honoured his father-in-law Janak with the greatest of respect by bringing him to the same level as his own father Dasrath, as well as that of sage Vishwamitra whom the Lord also respected as his father as well as his guru, and sage Vasistha who was of course his family priest and guru since his childhood days.

In other words, Janak was made exceptionally privileged and honoured by the Lord by bestowing upon him the combined honour of his father Dasrath, and two of the greatest sages of the time, sage Vishwamitra and sage Vasistha.

There is a subtle message in this honour. Lord Ram honoured Janak for his love and affection for him by treating the latter at par with his own father Dasrath. Then, Lord Ram acknowledged the level of spiritual knowledge, enlightenment and erudition of Janak by treating him at par with two great sages, Vishwamitra and Vasistha.]

बिनती बहुरि भरत सन कीन्ही । मिलि सप्रेमु पुनि आसिष दीन्ही ॥ ८ ॥

binatī bahuri bharata sana kīnhī. mili saprēmu puni āsiṣa dīnhī. 8.

The king then approached Bharat and politely prayed to him (in the same way as he had prayed to Lord Ram). Then he affectionately embraced Bharat and blessed him. (8)

[Note—The contrast is obvious: Janak had sought Lord Ram's blessings, but he blessed Bharat in this verse, and the other brothers too as we shall read below in Doha no. 342. This clearly indicates that though Janak had regarded all the brothers equally, he had had special respect and great devotion for Lord Ram as he knew that the real identity of the Lord was Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that

precedes Doha no. 349 herein above. Hence, Lord Ram was worthy of such respect as one would show to one's deity whom one worships.]

दो०. मिले लखन रिपुसूदनहि दीन्हि असीस महीस ।
भए परसपर प्रेमबस फिरि फिरि नावहिं सीस ॥ ३४२ ॥

dōhā.

milē lakhana ripusūdanahi dīnhi asīsa mahīsa.
bha'ē parasapara prēmabasa phiri phiri nāvahim sīsa. 342.

Next, the king met and embraced Laxman and Ripusudan (Shatrughan), and blessed them. All of them were overcome with emotions, bowing their heads repeatedly to one another as a sign of showing great respect for each other. (Doha no. 342)

[Note—We have read that a gesture is repeated to emphasise its earnestness and the depth of emotions. It's a polite way of making a request, showing honour and gratitude, or simply saying 'thank you'.

Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342 when Janak has 'repeatedly' prayed to Lord Ram with joined palms. Prior to this, Dasrath had also 'repeatedly' asked Janak to return home as he had come very far from the city to bid farewell to the marriage party—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 340.

Again we read that when Lord Ram and his brothers had gone to their mothers-in-law to take permission to leave for Ayodhya, then also the Lord had bowed before them 'repeatedly' to pay his respects—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 337.

When king Dasrath met sage Vishwamitra upon the former's arrival at Janakpur, he had also 'repeatedly' bowed his head before the sage to express his greatest of thanks to him for being instrumental in his son's (Lord Ram's) marriage and establishing his glory throughout the world motivating and enabling him (Lord Ram) to break the formidable bow which none of the other kings and princes could even move—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 308.]

चौ०. बार बार करि बिनय बड़ाई । रघुपति चले संग सब भाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bāra bāra kari binaya barāī. raghupati calē saṅga saba bhāī. 1.

After repeatedly paying his respects and honouring his father-in-law king Janak, Lord Ram ("Raghupati") proceeded ahead, along with his brothers, on his onward journey. (1)

[Note—The four brothers were well-bonded with each other; they were fond of each other and preferred to stay together. There are many instances of this brotherly love between them. For instance, when the Lord had gone to bid farewell to his mother-in-law in the palace of king Janak, and later on when he returned from there after receiving

blessings, he was accompanied by his other three brothers: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 334; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 337.

Earlier on, even during their childhood days, the four brothers had shown affinity, love and attachment for each other: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 198.

Once again we read that whenever Lord Ram went to hunt in the royal forest, he was accompanied by his brothers and friends: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 205. Similarly, when the Lord ate his meals, the four brothers sat together and were joined by their friends: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 205.

When Lord Ram had gone with sage Vishwamitra to the latter's hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice, he was accompanied by Laxman throughout the journey: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, and similarly when the Lord had gone for his 14-year exile he was joined by Laxman: refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76; and Doha no. 79.]

जनक गहे कौसिक पद जाई । चरन रेनु सिर नयनन्ह लाई ॥ २ ॥

सुनु मुनीस बर दरसन तोरें । अगमु न कछु प्रतीति मन मोरें ॥ ३ ॥

janaka gahē kausika pada jā'ī. carana rēnu sira nayananha lā'ī. 2.

sunu munīsa bara darasana tōrēm. agamu na kachu pratīti mana mōrēm. 3.

[Verse nos. 2-6 narrate Janak paying his deep respects to sage Vishwamitra at the time of bidding him farewell, and receiving the sage's blessings before returning back.]

Janak went to meet sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), and falling at the latter's feet, he grasped it reverentially. He showed his greatest respect to the sage by picking up the dust of the sage's feet and putting it on his head as well as applying it on his eyes (eye-lids). (2)

Then he said to sage Vishwamitra, 'Listen oh revered sage! It is a firm conviction of my Mana (mind and heart) that your divine sight is very auspicious and wish-fulling. Nothing is inaccessible when one is fortunate to have this sight. [That is, everything one expects can be realised and all his wishes are fulfilled if he is fortunate enough to meet you and have your 'Darshan' or holy sight. I have had a first-hand experience of this fact because my wish to have a glorious groom for my daughter Sita was fulfilled when I met you and paid my obeisance to you. What more can be said that let alone Sita, I have been able to marry all my daughters to equally noble grooms. Say, what more would a father want than to see all his daughters married to noble and glorious grooms who stand out in this world for their unique virtues and stupendous qualities. All this was made possible due to you and your blessings. Whatever happiness that I have today is the fruit of my having seen your divine feet and receiving your patronage and blessings.] (3)

[Note-- Refer: "Janki Mangal", verse no. 174 also.]

जो सुखु सुजसु लोकपति चहहीं । करत मनोरथ सकुचत अहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

सो सुखु सुजसु सुलभ मोहि स्वामी । सब सिधि तव दरसन अनुगामी ॥ ५ ॥

jō sukhu sujasu lōkapati cahahīm. karata manōratha sakucata ahahīm. 4.
sō sukhu sujasu sulabha mōhi svāmī. saba sidhi tava darasana anugāmī. 5.

That happiness and joy, that of fame, glory and honour which even the Lokpatis (the guardian of the world; the regional lords of the world; and even Indra, the king of gods and the world) yearn for, but are reluctant to express the desire for their fulfilment because these virtues are very difficult for them to access or realise in practical terms [4]—today, oh lord, the same eclectic happiness and joy, the same immensity of fame, glory and honour has been made accessible to me, they have been put within my reach. Verily, it has been made possible for me due to your divine sight, as all sorts of ‘Siddhis’ (fulfilments; acquisitions; achievements) follow in the wake of one being able to see you and have communion with you [5]. (4-5)

[Note—The happiness of Janak and the intensity of his joy have been narrated elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 286.

Janak has given all credits for his happiness and sense of fulfilment to sage Vishwamitra to show his great respect for the sage as well as a token of his thanks-giving to him. Janak is overwhelmed with gratitude for the sage, because he realises that had the sage not come with Lord Ram and Laxman, and had he not ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow, none of the dreams of Janak would have borne fruits. The chance to marry Sita and her other sisters to such noble princes as Lord Ram and his three brothers who belonged to a renowned royal family of Ayodhya, which was one of the most famous and glorious families of the time, and who were themselves excellent princes, being like treasuries of eclectic virtues and excellent qualities—was made possible because of sage Vishwamitra’s intervention and motivation. It was he who had brought Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur, it was he who had ordered Lord Ram to break the bow, it was he who had ordered that Dasrath be invited with his entourage to Janakpur so that all the four brothers could assemble at one place and get married. Refer respectively to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 174 also.]

कीन्हि बिनय पुनि पुनि सिरु नाई । फिरे महीसु आसिषा पाई ॥ ६ ॥

kīnhi binaya puni puni siru nā'ī. phirē mahīsu āsiṣā pā'ī. 6.

The king (Janak) repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of sage Vishwamitra and prayed to him. Then, having received the sage’s blessings, the king returned home. (6)

[Note—Sage Vishwamitra was the last one whom king Janak met before the marriage party finally proceeded to Ayodhya with full speed.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 22 also.]

चली बरात निसान बजाई । मुदित छोट बड़ सब समुदाई ॥ ७ ॥
रामहि निरखि ग्राम नर नारी । पाइ नयन फलु होहिं सुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

calī barāta nisāna bajā'ī. mudita chōṭa barā saba samudā'ī. 7.
rāmahi nirakhi grāma nara nārī. pā'ī nayana phalu hōhim sukhārī. 8.

Finally, the bridegrooms' party started earnestly on its return journey for Ayodhya to the accompaniment of sound of the kettle-drums. Everyone amongst its members, the young and the old, were delighted and euphoric, individually as well as in a group¹. (7)

The men and the women who lived in the roadside villages enroute to Ayodhya were very delighted at the opportunity to see Lord Ram (decked up like a groom) as he strode ahead with the marriage party. They felt that they have got their reward of having an eyesight when they gazed at Lord Ram (because it is this faculty of sight that enabled them to enjoy the beauty of the Lord's magnificent and divine form)². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 169 and Chanda no. 22; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 339; Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 343; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 263.

²When Lord Ram will go to the 14-year forest exile, we shall read about the same delight and sentiments of the wayside villagers—refer for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 114 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

दो०. बीच बीच बर बास करि मग लोगन्ह सुख देत ।
अवध समीप पुनीत दिन पहुँची आइ जनेत ॥ ३४३ ॥

dōhā.

bīca bīca bara bāsa kari maga lōganha sukha dēta.
avadha samīpa punīta dina pahum'cī ā'ī janēta. 343.

Halting at convenient places on their way back, and in the process providing great delight and joy to the people who lived alongside the way (in the numerous villages and hamlets lying en-route), the marriage procession arrived near the city of Ayodhya on an auspicious day. (Doha no. 343)

[Note—We have read earlier that king Janak had already sent advance parties to prepare convenient spots on the road to Ayodhya, and make all arrangements for the basic comforts of the marriage party when it halted at these locations. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.]

चौ०. हने निसान पनव बर बाजे । भेरि संख धुनि हय गय गाजे ॥ १ ॥
झाँझि बिरव डिंडिमीं सुहाई । सरस राग बाजहिं सहनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

hanē nisāna panava bara bājē. bhēri saṅkha dhuni haya gaya gājē. 1.
jhām̃jhi birava ḍiṇḍim̃m suhā'ī. sarasa rāga bājahir̃m sahanā'ī. 2.

As the marriage procession moved ahead on its onward journey to Ayodhya, it was accompanied by a constant playing of various musical instruments. Different varieties of kettle-drums known as Nishan, Panav and Bheri were played all along the way, and so were the conchs that accompanied the loud neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants [1], the clash of cymbals and tabors, and pleasant music from the clarionet [2]. (1-2)

[Note—The marriage procession did not move silently and in a disciplined manner like a marching army, but it wend its way back to Ayodhya in an atmosphere of merriment and revelry, enjoying every mile of the way of the long journey back home, with music and dance and celebrations galore. This is the way it had come from Ayodhya to Janakpur, and it is the same way it went back. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 302 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.]

पुर जन आवत अकनि बराता । मुदित सकल पुलकावलि गाता ॥ ३ ॥

pura jana āvata akani barātā. mudita sakala pulakāvali gātā. 3.

When the inhabitants of Ayodhya heard the sound of this music from a distance, they concluded that the marriage procession has arrived. Everyone was delighted and euphoric with joy, and their bodies were thrilled with excitement. (3)

[Note—The musical instruments that were played were so loud that the arrival of the party was heralded by this sound from a great distance. The people were waiting for this sound, and as soon as they heard it there was an immediate celebration in the city of Ayodhya.

A similar thing has happened when the marriage party had gone to Janakpur: its arrival was announced by the sound of musical instruments from a great distance, and it was reciprocated by similar playing of musical instruments in the city of Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes it.]

निज निज सुंदर सदन सँवारे । हाट बाट चौहट पुर द्वारे ॥ ४ ॥
गलीं सकल अरगजाँ सिंचाई । जहँ तहँ चौकें चारु पुराई ॥ ५ ॥

nija nija sundara sadana sam̃vārē. hāṭa bāṭa cauhaṭa pura dvārē. 4.
galīm̃ sakala aragajām̃ siṅcā'īm̃. jaham̃ taham̃ caukēm̃ cāru purā'īm̃. 5.

The citizens of Ayodhya decorated their own homes beautifully and colourfully, as also were the market places, the streets, the squares and the gates of the city were all decked up with the best of décor and finery¹. (4)

All the lanes and by-lanes of the city were washed with scented water, and ceremonial squares² were made and filled with auspicious things all over the city. (5)

[Note—¹There are references of similar decorations being made in the cities of Janakpur and Ayodhya on earlier occasions also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 287 where it is said that Janak had ordered that the entire city of Janakpur be decorated to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram; (ii) Doha no. 296 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that narrate how the city of Ayodhya was decorated when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived there.

²These squares were made, or rather drawn on the ground by using a mixture of coloured powder and flour of wheat and rice, and such things as lighted lamps, stems of the banana trees, canopies, festoons and hangings were placed around them for the purpose of decoration.

Such squares are made on auspicious occasions even today in India, both at public places as well as in the front and the inside of private properties.

Refer also to: "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 1181—184, and Chanda no. 23 with respect to the decoration and celebrations in Ayodhya when the marriage party returned.]

बना बजारु न जाइ बखाना । तोरन केतु पताक बिताना ॥ ६ ॥

banā bajāru na jā'i bakhānā. tōrana kētu patāka bitānā. 6.

The markets were so wonderfully decorated that one cannot describe their beauty and attractiveness. They were adorned with ceremonial arches, flags, banners, festoons, parasols and canopies of varying shapes and forms. (6)

[Note—Refer also to other instances of such decorations in Ram Charit Manas: (a) Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 213; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 6 which say that king Dasrath had ordered that the city of Ayodhya should be beautifully decked up for the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram which was however aborted due to the tantrums created by Kaikeyi, the step-mother of Lord Ram who wanted her own son Bharat to be put on the throne.

Later on in this epic story we read that when Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya at the end of his 14-years forest exile and the successful Lanka campaign, the city of Ayodhya was decorated in the same manner as it is being done now when the Lord's marriage procession has reached it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 9.]

सफल पूगफल कदलि रसाला । रोपे बकुल कदंब तमाला ॥ ७ ॥

लगे सुभग तरु परसत धरनी । मनिमय आलबाल कल करनी ॥ ८ ॥

saphala pūgaphala kadali rasālā. rōpē bakula kadamba tamālā. 7.

lagē subhaga taru parasata dharanī. manimaya ālabāla kala karanī. 8.

Fruit laden trees of the areca-nut (or the betel-nut; "Poogphal"), the plantain ("Kadali"), the mango ("Rasaal"), the Bakul ("mimusops slengi" plant), the Kadamba ("neulea orientalis" plant), and the black catechu ("Tamaal"; the evergreen "xanthocymus

epictorius” plant) were transplanted at different places in the city, all along its avenues, squares and other public places. (7)

These beautiful trees were so abundantly laden with their respective fruits that their branches seemed to touch the ground. The bowl-shaped fences that were made at the place where these trees were transplanted on the ground were expertly crafted by artisans and were magnificently decorated with precious gems embedded on their sides. (8)

[Note—An exactly similar narration is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand when the city was being decorated for the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram, which was however aborted due to intrigue created by his step-mother Kaikeyi. Refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 6.

The beauty of a tree lies in its ability to produce abundant fruits, flowers and leaves so much so that its branches bend by their weight. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 227 where the royal garden of king Janak is being described.

A similar idea is expressed when the beauty of the forest through which Lord Ram passed is being described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 38, and once again in Doha no. 40 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7.]

दो०. बिबिध भाँति मंगल कलस गृह गृह रचे सँवारि।

सुर ब्रह्मादि सिंहाहिं सब रघुबर पुरी निहारि ॥ ३४४ ॥

dōhā.

bibidha bhāmṭi maṅgala kalasa gr̥ha gr̥ha racē samvāri.
sura brahmādi sihāhiṁ saba raghubara purī nihāri. 344.

Each home of the city was beautifully decorated with auspicious pitchers of various kinds (i.e. of different colours, shapes and sizes as well as materials such as clay, brass, gold, silver, platinum etc.).

The city of Lord Ram (“Raghubar”, literally meaning the most exalted member of king Raghu’s lineage) was so astoundingly and stunningly beautiful that even the gods, including Brahma the creator and other senior gods, praised it abundantly. (Doha no. 344)

[Note—This idea has been expressed elsewhere also. For instance, when Lord Ram was born, the city of Ayodhya was so fascinating and wonderful to look at that the gods were not only charmed, but stunned as well, with its magnificence and grandeur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195; and Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 296.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 296, and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9 where it is said that golden pitchers were put up by the citizens which refer to putting up auspicious pitchers for the purpose of decoration.

Tulsidas’ another book titled “Janaki Mangal” which exclusively deals with the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita also describes the wonderful beauty of Ayodhya at the time the marriage party arrived with the four grooms and their respective brides in its verse nos. 181—184 and Chanda no. 23.

Later on in the story we will read that after Lord Ram ascended the throne of Ayodhya, the city and the kingdom as a whole were so wonderfully looked after that even the goddess of speech known as Sarda, and the thousand tongued serpent named Seshnath could not describe their magnificence and beauty—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22.]

चौ०. भूप भवनु तेहि अवसर सोहा । रचना देखि मदन मनु मोहा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa bhavanu tēhi avasara sōhā. racanā dēkhi madana manu mōhā. 1.

The king's (i.e. Dasrath's) palace looked most charming on that occasion. Its magnificence was such that it captivated the Mana (mind and heart) of even Kamdeo (cupid). (1)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 4.]

मंगल सगुन मनोहरताई । रिधि सिधि सुख संपदा सुहाई ॥ २ ॥

जनु उछाह सब सहज सुहाए । तनु धरि धरि दसरथ गृहं छाए ॥ ३ ॥

देखन हेतु राम बैदेही । कहहु लालसा होहि न केही ॥ ४ ॥

maṅgala saguna manōharatāī. ridhi sidhi sukha sampadā suhāī. 2.

janu uchāha saba sahaja suhā'ē. tanu dhari dhari dasaratha gr̥ham' chā'ē. 3.

dēkhana hētu rāma baidēhī. kahahu lālasā hōhi na kēhī. 4.

[Why was the king's palace so fabulous to look at? This question is answered now:-]

It appeared that all forms of auspiciousness, all sorts of good omens, all types of beauty and magnificence, along with all the Riddhis and Siddhis symbolising prosperity, affluence, well-being, happiness, joys and mystical achievements, as well as all festivities and celebrations have collectively assumed a personified, physical form, and taken up their residence in the palace of Dasrath.¹ (2-3)

Say, who will not have a desire to closely watch Lord Ram and Sita?² [This verse answers the question why all the good and auspicious things in this world, as listed herein above, felt it was their golden opportunity to have a close interaction and viewing of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita. So they decided to assume some physical form and enter the royal palace.] (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

²That is, everyone wished to avail of the opportunity to be in close proximity of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita, so that a close-up view of the Lord and his divine consort can be had. Therefore, all the virtues listed here assumed some form or the other and entered the royal palace so as to see Lord Ram and Sita from close quarters.

We have already read that at the time of marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, as well as all the other three brothers of the Lord at Janakpur, the gods and goddesses too had assumed human forms and entered the royal palace of king Janak precisely for this reason—that they will have a golden chance to see the Lord and Sita from up close and also to mark their presence and participate in this eventful historical occasion that is not to come again in their lifetimes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318, and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.]

जूथ जूथ मिलि चलीं सुआसिनि । निज छबि निदरहिं मदन बिलासिनि ॥ ५ ॥
सकल सुमंगल सजें आरती । गावहिं जनु बहु बेष भारती ॥ ६ ॥

jūtha jūtha mili calīṁ su'āsini. nija chabi nidarahiṁ madana bilāsini. 5.
sakala sumaṅgala sajēṁ āratī. gāvahiṁ janu bahu bēṣa bhāratī. 6.

Women of noble character formed large groups and moved forward¹ (to welcome the marriage party and to have the first chance to see Lord Ram with Sita²). These women-folk were so beautiful to look at that they put to shame the pride of Rati (the consort of Kamdeo/cupid) with respect to her own beauty and charm.³ [That is, the women were all exceptionally charming and beautiful to look at, and their magnificence was much more than the charm of Rati who thought that she was the most attractive and beautiful woman in creation. Her pride was trounced when she saw the women of Ayodhya.] (5)

They arranged the necessary items for doing the 'Aarti'⁴ (of Lord Ram and his bride Sita, as also of all other members of the marriage party such as the king himself and the Lord's other three brothers). All of them sang melodious songs of felicitation as if goddess Bharti (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of voice and arts) has herself personified in the form of these ladies to sing such sweet and auspicious songs.⁵ (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 297 which describes the same thing happening in Ayodhya when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the women-folk cheerfully proceeded towards the palace of king Dasrath when the news of the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers spread in the city of Ayodhya; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286 which tells us how groups of charming ladies began singing like the cuckoo when sage Parashuram had asked for forgiveness from Lord Ram and went to the forest, thereby ending the stalemate and allowing the resumption of celebrations.

²This observation is based on the fact that the news of the marriage of Lord Ram's other three brothers hadn't reached Ayodhya till this point of time.

⁴"Aarti" is showing of lighted earthen lamps as a gesture of warm and ceremonial welcome of an honoured person. These lamps are placed on a decorated platter which also contains other auspicious items considered auspicious, such as rice grains, blades of grass, scented water, coloured powder of herbs, etc. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 297; and (ii) Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that tell us how the Aarti is arranged.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the women-folk cheerfully performed the “Aarti” of the newly born four divine brothers, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.

At the time of departure of the marriage party from Ayodhya for Janakpur, the ladies of the city had gone on the roof-tops of their homes to perform the Aarti of the procession as it passed through the streets of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

Then we read that when Lord Ram had broken the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on the Lord, all the ladies and the men of Janakpur had performed their Aarti at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony itself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265.

⁵Refer also to the following instance where songs were sung by the charming ladies in honour of Lord Ram and Sita: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 297 which is very specific on this subject.

Besides the above, the women-folk had sung songs when they were going to the palace of king Dasrath to perform the Aarti of the newly born four brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Even at the time of the departure of the marriage party for Janakpur, the ladies of Ayodhya had gathered on their roof-tops to sing songs—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 301.]

भूपति भवन कोलाहलु होई । जाइ न बरनि समउ सुखु सोई ॥ ७ ॥

bhūpati bhavana kōlāhalu hō'ī. jā'i na barani sama'u sukhu sō'ī. 7.

There was a lot of rejoicing, revelry and celebrations in the royal palace so much so that the whole place was filled with rapturous sound of joy and merry-making as the entire household erupted in an outburst of cheer, exhilaration and ecstasy.

Verily indeed, it is not possible to describe the level of happiness and joy, of ecstasy and exhilaration, and the atmosphere of revelry and celebrations that prevailed at that time. (7)

[Note—Refer also to similar rapturous sounds of joy and celebrations that erupted emotions as narrated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 302 that describe the situation at the time of the departure of Lord Ram's marriage party for Janakpur.

Once again we read that when Sita arrives at the venue where the marriage rituals were to be performed, there was an eruption of joy and a thunderous that accompanied the playing of musical instruments, singing of songs, chanting of scriptural hymns and cheering by the citizens—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

कौसल्यादि राम महतारीं । प्रेमबिबस तन दसा बिसारीं ॥ ८ ॥

kausalyādi rāma mahatārīm. prēmabibasa tana dasā bisārīm. 8.

Mother Kaushalya (the eldest queen-mother) and the other mothers of Lord Ram (i.e. Sumitra and Kaikeyi) were overwhelmed with love and affection so much so that they

lost awareness of the condition of their bodies (because they were highly thrilled and ecstatic with joy so as to lose awareness of their surroundings). (8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 295 which describe the mothers' happiness when king Dasrath read aloud the invitation letter that had come from Janakpur with the announcement that Lord Ram had married Sita by breaking the bow.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 345 below which expressly states that the mothers were numbed with emotions and their legs refused to move.]

दो०. दिए दान बिप्रन्ह बिपुल पूजि गनेस पुरारि ।
प्रमुदित परम दरिद्र जनु पाइ पदारथ चारि ॥ ३४५ ॥

dōhā.

di'ē dāna bipranha bipula pūji ganēsa purāri.
pramudita parama daridra janu pā'i padāratha cāri. 345.

The mothers liberally gave away abundant quantities of donations and gifts to the Brahmins¹, and they also prayed to Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva².

The mothers were so exceptionally happy as if a highly impoverished person is able to lay his hands on the four excellent fruits that are regarded as the best of rewards for one's meritorious deeds, fulfilling all his desires and leaving him fully contented³. (Doha no. 345)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it. They describe the same thing, when the queens had liberally given away alms and gifts to Brahmins and other seekers when they learnt about the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.

²Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva, as well as goddess Parvati who is the mother of Ganesh and the divine consort of Lord Shiva are always worshipped when any good event happens or at the time of starting some auspicious deed. There are many instances supporting this. Some of the instances are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 301 that says that king Dasrath had offered his prayers to Lord Ganesh and Gauri (Parvati) at the time of departure of the marriage procession for Janakpur; (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 which describes how Gauri and Ganesh were offered worship by the priests at the commencement of the marriage rituals of Lord Ram and Sita.

We shall be reading shortly that when Lord Ram enters the city of Ayodhya, he has invoked and offered his respects to Lord Shiva, Parvati and Ganesh to seek their blessings: refer—Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 347 herein below.

Similarly, when the Lord had started on his journey for the forest later on in the story, he has once again offered similar prayers to these deities: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.

³Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309; and (ii) Doha no. 325 along with notes appended to them.]

चौ०. मोद प्रमोद बिबस सब माता । चलहिं न चरन सिथिल भए गाता ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

mōda pramōda bibasa saba mātā. calahim na carana sithila bha'e gātā. 1.

All the mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) were overwhelmed with emotions of joy and ecstasy so much so that their legs felt heavy and refused to move¹ as their bodies became numbed out of surging emotions². (1)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 that tells us that king Janak's legs also felt as heavy like a man who was tired of swimming but fortunately finds land.

Similarly, we shall read later on in the story that when Lord Ram met sage Sutikshan in the forest, the sage was so dumbstruck that he became immobile with disbelief that the Lord of the world is standing right in his front, before his eyes. The sage stood motionless like in a portrait. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 21-24 that precede Doha no. 10.

Further on we read that when the Lord went to meet the old hermitress named Sabari, she too was dumbstruck and unable to speak a word for sometime—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34.

²Refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345 herein above which states that the mothers were so overcome with emotions that they lost awareness of their bodies, i.e. their bodies became numbed from surging emotions.

A person loses awareness of his own self and his surroundings on two occasions—either when he is overcome with extreme grief, or from extreme happiness. In the present case, it is 'extreme happiness'.

When the crow saint Kaagbhusund had accompanied Lord Shiva, both having assumed human forms, to go and visit Ayodhya to participate in the celebrations at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his other brothers there, they too had become so ecstatic that they lost awareness of themselves and their surroundings. This is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 196.

Similarly we read that when Sita first saw Lord Ram in the royal garden where he had gone to pluck flowers for his guru's worship rituals, she had been overwhelmed by the most enchanting sight of the Lord so much so that she also lost awareness of her body and her surroundings, and even that she must not become infatuated with a stranger but perform her worshipping of goddess Parvati for which she had come to the garden in the first place, and return home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232.

At the time Sita was brought to the venue of the marriage rituals, he sight also filled all those who saw here with so much joy that all of them lost senses of their own self and their surroundings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.

As observed herein above, one loses the sense of the existence of his physical body and its feelings either when one is exceedingly happy as in all the cases referred to herein above, or when one is struck by extreme sorrow or grief as it happened to Dasrath when Kaikeyi asked him to send Lord Ram to 14 years of forest exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35. Similarly we see Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya was struck with grief and her body shook with shock

when she came to know about her beloved son going to the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 54.]

राम दरस हित अति अनुरागीं । परिछनि साजु सजन सब लागीं ॥ २ ॥

rāma darasa hita ati anurāgīṁ. parichani sāju sajana saba lāgīṁ. 2.

All the mothers were very eager to have ‘Darshan’ (holy viewing; to see someone who is revered) of Lord Ram, and in order to warmly welcome him as well as to honour the Lord and pay their obeisance to him, they began to make preparations by collecting and arranging auspicious things needed for such occasions¹. (2)

[Note—¹These things are described below in Doha no. 346 and its preceding verse nos. 4-8.]

बिबिध बिधान बाजने बाजे । मंगल मुदित सुमित्राँ साजे ॥ ३ ॥

bibidha bidhāna bājanē bājē. maṅgala mudita sumitrāṁ sājē. 3.

Musical instruments of different kinds began playing melodious music of all notes. Meanwhile, Sumitra cheerfully collected all the auspicious items of good omen (needed to welcome the arriving marriage party). [What these items were are described in the verses that follow below.] (3)

हरद दूब दधि पल्लव फूला । पान पूगफल मंगल मूला ॥ ४ ॥

अच्छत अंकुर लोचन लाजा । मंजुल मंजरि तुलसि बिराजा ॥ ५ ॥

harada dūba dadhi pallava phūlā. pāna pūgaphala maṅgala mūlā. 4.
acchata aṅkura lōcana lājā. maṅjula maṅjari tulasi birājā. 5.

[Verse nos. 4-7 tell us the auspicious items of good omen that Sumitra, Lord Ram’s step-mother and the mother of Laxman, had collected and arranged on a plate with which she and other mothers would perform the “Aarti ritual”, mentioned in verse no. 8, of the four grooms and their brides.]

Things that are considered as harbingers of good omen and used for auspicious ceremonies that were collected by Sumitra were the following—Harada (literally meaning “yellow”, a reference to turmeric because it is deep yellow), blades of Durba grass (a special family of grass that is dark in colour), Dadhi (curd), Pallav (leaves, especially of the mango tree), Phool (flowers of various kinds), Paan (betel leaves), Poog-phal (betel-nuts), Mangal Mool (roots of certain plants that are regarded as auspicious) [4]----

-----Akshat (unbroken rice grains), Ankur (sprouts of barley and other grains), Gorochan (a yellow pigment extracted from the bile of cows), Lava (parched and dried flakes of paddy), and Manjul Manjari (lovely blossoms) of the Tulsi (Basil) plant, [5] (4-5)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos 2 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

छुहे पुरट घट सहज सुहाए । मदन सकुन जनु नीड़ बनाए ॥ ६ ॥

chuhē puraṭa ghaṭa sahaja suhā'ē. madana sakuna janu nīṛa banā'ē. 6.

[Besides the above things, Sumitra also arranged for the following items—] Golden pitchers were coloured so beautifully and looked so captivating as if birds symbolising Kamdeo (cupid) had decided to make them their nests. (6)

[Note—That is, amidst the other paraphernalia collected for the formal welcoming ceremony of the marriage party, there were small coloured golden pots which looked as if small beautiful birds representing the god of beauty and charm, known as Kamdeo, have come to sit down amongst the other items so as to mingle with them and get an opportunity to worship and see Lord Ram and Sita, as well as the other brothers and their brides, from close quarters when these auspicious items would be used by the mothers to welcome the Lord and do his Aarti.

Whenever the magnificence, charm, attractiveness and beauty of something are to be emphasised, Tulsidas invokes Kamdeo as he is the patron deity of these virtues. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 350 which describes that the four thrones upon which the four grooms (Lord Ram and his three brothers) and their respective brides (Sita and her sisters) were seated were so magnificent to behold that it appeared that these thrones were made by Kamdeo himself with his own hands.]

सगुन सुगंध न जाहिं बखानी । मंगल सकल सजहिं सब रानी ॥ ७ ॥

saguna sugandha na jāhiṁ bakhānī. maṅgala sakala sajahīṁ saba rānī. 7.

In addition to the items mentioned above, there were different perfumes of so many varieties that they cannot be described.

In this way, the queens collected various auspicious things indicating good omens as they prepared themselves to formally welcome the marriage party when it would arrive shortly at the gates of the royal palace. (7)

रचीं आरतीं बहुत बिधाना । मुदित करहिं कल मंगल गाना ॥ ८ ॥

racīṁ āratīṁ bahuta bidhānā. mudita karahīṁ kala maṅgala gānā. 8.

Having thus made diverse and all possible arrangements for doing the Aarti (at the time of arrival of the marriage procession at the gates of the royal palace by showing of lighted lamps and sprinkling other auspicious items enumerated above), the queens joyfully sang auspicious songs befitting the festive atmosphere and the happy occasion (as they waited for the arrival of the procession at the palace). (8)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317 which describe the similar performance of Aarti when Lord Ram arrived at the venue of the marriage ceremony dressed as a groom.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 345 we read about the women-folk of Ayodhya preparing to perform the Aarti of the four brothers and their brides when they returned home.]

दो०. कनक थार भरि मंगलन्हि कमल करन्हि लिँ मात ।
चलीं मुदित परिछनि करन पुलक पल्लवित गात ॥ ३४६ ॥

dōhā.

kanaka thāra bhari maṅgalanhi kamala karanhi li'ēṁ māta.
calīṁ mudita parichani karana pulaka pallavita gāta. 346.

Holding golden plates filled with all the items of good omen that they had collected (and enumerated in the above verses), the queen-mothers proceeded ahead cheerfully, with their bodies thrilled with pleasant emotions, to welcome their sons and the marriage party upon their arrival at the gates of the royal palace. (Doha no. 346)

[Note—The queen-mothers were very eager to see Lord Ram return home with his bride. In fact, it was a universal refrain with everyone that they were all eager to have a divine sight of the Lord—refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 300.]

चौ०. धूप धूम नभु मेचक भयऊ । सावन घन घमंडु जनु ठयऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

dhūpa dhūma nabhu mēcaka bhaya'ū. sāvana ghana ghamanḍu janu ṭhaya'ū. 1.

[In the following verses, the celebrations and festivities of Ayodhya at the time of the arrival of the marriage procession are being described. A great resemblance is to be found between this description and the one that follows the birth of the four brothers in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

It ought to be noted here that these verses have liberally employed wonderful metaphors to describe the festive atmosphere in Ayodhya at that time—that of the rainy season with its dark rain-bearing clouds, rainbows, lightening and rows of birds flying across the sky against the backdrop of the clouds, the thunder and clap, the falling of rain and the scent that is created when it falls on the ground, the loud sound of croaking frogs, singing larks, screaming peacocks, and the citizens feeling happy just like the farmer feels when it rains to save his crops and when he has had a rich harvest—all these have been employed here.]

The whole sky was covered with a thick veil formed by smoke arising from burning of incense and by the spraying of perfumes as if dark rain-bearing clouds of the rainy season have arisen from the horizon and spread all across the canopy of the sky. (1)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 195 which refers to the sky being filled with flying coloured powder and smoke from burning incense at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers in Ayodhya.]

सुरतरु सुमन माल सुर बरषहिं । मनहुँ बलाक अवलि मनु करषहिं ॥ २ ॥

surataru sumana māla sura baraṣahim. manahum̐ balāka avalī manu karaṣahim. 2.

The gods rained down garlands made of flowers from the evergreen tree of heaven, known as the ‘Surtaru’ (literally meaning the “tree of gods”)¹. They looked like rows of herons flying in the sky, a sight that captivates the ‘Mana’ (mind and heart) of the beholder². (2)

[Note—We have read on many earlier occasions that the gods have showered flowers from the heaven. Some of the instances are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 297; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 324; (iv) Doha no. 324 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7; and (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323.

The only difference is that at all the above places the gods have showered ‘flowers’, but here they have showered ‘garlands’.

²When Sita had raised her arms to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, a similar metaphor of rows of birds has been used, but with a little variance. There the garland in the hands of Sita is compared to a lotus flower with its stalk, but here the comparison is made to the row of herons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264.

However, in “Geetawali” (one of the other wonderful books of Tulsidas), Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4, the metaphor that is used to describe the beautiful sight of Lord Ram wearing the victory garland around his neck is that of a row of swans coming down to settle down on the branches of the Tamal tree (the black catechu plant).]

मंजुल मनिमय बंदनिवारे । मनहुँ पाकरिपु चाप सँवारे ॥ ३ ॥

manjula manimaya bandanivārē. manahum̐ pākariṣu cāpa saṁvārē. 3.

Colourful and beautifully decorated festoons and buntings, richly embroidered with precious stones and priceless gems, were hung up everywhere as if many rainbows had appeared in the sky simultaneously. (3)

[Note—The metaphor of the rainbow implies that the entire city was decorated with countless festive banners put up high above the ground so that they were visible from all the corners of the city. Against the dark cloud formed by the smoke of burning incense, these colourful banners and festoons simmered in the reflected light of the city so as to resemble many rainbows appearing simultaneously.]

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 289; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 296.

The use of the metaphor of the ‘rainbow’ indicates that the houses of Ayodhya were reasonably high-rise because some of the banners may have been strung across the breadth of the streets, tied to two rooftops on either side of the street. This observation finds proof in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 27.

Another place where the “rainbow” has been used as a metaphor is in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100 when the war scene is being described in the battle-field of Lanka. But here, the rainbow refers to the numerous bent tails of countless illusionary Hanumans that Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, had created using his magical powers to create confusion in the army of Lord Ram.

The book “Janki Mangal” of Tulsidas also refers to the colourful festoons and buntings in its verse no. 184.]

प्रगटहिं दुरहिं अटन्ह पर भामिनि । चारु चपल जनु दमकहिं दामिनि ॥ ४ ॥

pragaṭahim durahim aṭanha para bhāmini. cāru capala janu damakahim dāmini. 4.

The sight of lovely ladies appearing and disappearing repeatedly on the roof-tops of houses (as they excitedly peered over from the roof-top balconies and railings to look at the crowd and celebrations down on the streets) resembled a dazzle of lightening that appears and disappears quickly in the sky (when rain-bearing clouds appear during the rainy season). (4)

[Note—Not all the ladies were able to join the celebrations on the streets. Some stayed back home, and these ladies climbed to the terraces of their homes to crane their necks to get a glimpse of the celebrations in the city. The roof-tops were jam-packed with excited women even as they jostled with each other to have a better view of the happenings. All these ladies wore sparkling ornaments and clothes, and therefore from the streets below their quick appearance and disappearance over the edges of the terraces and balconies of their homes reminded one of the scene of appearance and disappearance of quick and rapid flashes of lightening in the cloud during the rainy season.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 297 that compares the beauty of the fully adorned ladies of Ayodhya with dazzle of lightening.]

दुंदुभि धुनि घन गरजनि घोरा । जाचक चातक दादुर मोरा ॥ ५ ॥

dundubhi dhuni ghana garajani ghōrā. jācaka cātaka dādura mōrā. 5.

The clamour of the sound produced by enthusiastic beating of the kettle-drums resembled the reverberation created by the clap of thunder and its echoing sound.

Similarly, the babble of sounds created by alms-seekers was like the cacophony created by croaking frogs, sighing Chatak bird (sparrow hawk), and the screaming of peacocks (during the rainy season). (5)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296; and Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.]

During the rainy season, these three creatures are usually heard when the cloud appears in the sky. The frog croaks, the peacock screams, and the sparrow hawk begins to 'sigh' because it is very much in love with the rain and hopes the cloud will oblige it by putting a drop of rain-water into its beak directly to finally quench its thirst.

The sound of the kettle-drum is very loud, and it resembles the rumbling and thundering of the clouds. The kettle-drum was the standard instrument used in those days to announce some important moment or event precisely because of its quality to produce a loud reverberating sound, louder and deeper than the conventional drum. When the kettle-drum was beaten, its sound could be heard for long distances. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 301; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304; (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313; (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 344.]

सुर सुगंध सुचि बरषहिं बारी । सुखी सकल ससि पुर नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

sura sugandha suci baraṣahīṁ bārī. sukhī sakala sasi pura nara nārī. 6.

The gods showered scented perfumes from the sky that resembled rain water filled with a pleasant and exotic scent. [When the rain falls on the ground, a pleasant scent emanates from the soil, and the whole environment is filled with its earthen fragrance.]

All the men and the women of the city (Ayodhya) were happy like the crop that blooms when the rain falls. [Here, the citizens are like the crop, and when the gods showered perfumes on the city, these citizens felt exhilarated and rejuvenated like the crop does when rain falls on the ground. In other words, all the citizens of Ayodhya were very happy and joyous at the news that Lord Ram and his marriage party have arrived.] (6)

समउ जानि गुर आयसु दीन्हा । पुर प्रबेसु रघुकुलमनि कीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

sama'u jāni gura āyasu dīnhā. pura prabēsu raghukulamani kīnhā. 7.

When the right time arrived (i.e. when the time was auspicious), the guru (sage Vasistha) ordered the king to enter the city. At his commands, the king (Dasrath) who was like a gem in the dynasty of king Raghu ("Raghu-kul-mani") entered the city. (7)

[Note—The guru's orders were always taken before doing anything, and the guru gave his consent only when the time was right and opportune. There are many instances supporting this. For example: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 218 when Lord Ram has sought the permission of sage Vishwamitra before going to visit the city of Janakpur for sight-seeing; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227 where we read that when the time came, Lord Ram took permission from his guru, sage Vishwamitra, to go and bring flowers for the worship rituals of the sage; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 which narrates that Lord Ram took orders from his to do his evening prayers; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that

precedes Doha no. 262; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254 when sage Vishwamitra found that the opportune moment had arrived and he ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow.

Further we read that Janak has called Sita to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony when the right moment arrived—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 246. Similarly, even at the time of the final marriage rituals, Sita was called only when the two gurus, sages Vasistha and Satanand, had decided that the right moment had arrived and had ordered king Janak to call Sita to the venue—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 322.

Janak had sought and obtained the permission of guru sage Vasistha when he decided to marry all the princesses of Janakpur to the four princes of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 325.]

सुमिरि संभु गिरिजा गनराजा । मुदित महीपति सहित समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

sumiri sambhu girijā ganarājā. mudita mahīpati sahita samājā. 8.

[At the time of entering the city of Ayodhya—] The king invoked (reverentially remembered) Lord Shiva, goddess Girija (Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva) and Ganaraaj (Lord Ganesh, the chief of the attendants of Shiva)¹ and felt very euphoric and happy along with the rest of the members of the marriage party. (8)

[Note—¹Once again we see here that invoking Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesh and goddess Parvati was a standard practice before leaving or entering any place.

For instance, when king Dasrath boarded his chariot to leave for Janakpur with the marriage party of Lord Ram, he had prayed to these deities—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 301.

Later on in the story we shall read that at the time of departure for the forest, Lord Ram had too offered his obeisance to these deities in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 81.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323, and (ii) Doha no. 345.]

दो०. होहिं सगुन बरषहिं सुमन सुर दुंदुभीं बजाइ ।
बिबुध बधू नाचहिं मुदित मंजुल मंगल गाइ ॥ ३४७ ॥

dōhā.

hōhīm saguna baraṣahīm sumana sura dundubhīm bajā'i.
bibudha badhū nācahīm mudita mañjula maṅgala gā'i. 347.

Many auspicious and good omens occurred at those moments. The gods showered flowers from the sky and played the kettle-drums to celebrate the occasion (of the marriage procession entering the city of Ayodhya).

The consort of the gods as well as other celestial nymphs danced merrily in gay abundance as they sang melodious songs befitting the happy moments. (347)

[Note—Similar narration of gods showering flowers and playing their kettle-drums, as well as their consorts and celestial nymphs dancing and singing appear elsewhere also.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 285; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (iii) Doha no. 264 and its following Chaupai line no. 1; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 323; (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262.]

चौ०. मागध सूत बंदि नट नागर । गावहिं जसु तिहु लोक उजागर ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

māgadha sūta bandi naṭa nāgara. gāvahiṃ jasu tihu lōka ujāgara. 1.

The city's bards, minstrels, singers and dancers sang the glories of the family (i.e. of king Dasrath and his four sons, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) that was well-established and renowned in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. in the heaven, the earth and the nether world). (1)

[Note—These bards, minstrels, singers and dancers had joined the marriage party when it left Ayodhya for Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 300.

Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 265, and Doha no. 262 which say that when Lord Ram broke the bow and married Sita, the minstrels and bards began praising the Lord's glory and fame that had spread to all the three divisions of the world—i.e. all over the earth, in the nether world (the subterranean world) and the heaven—by the virtue of this remarkable feat.

They also praised Dasrath because there was no one more praise-worthy than him in the three worlds because he was fortunate to have the supreme Lord as his son in the form of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294; and Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

जय धुनि बिमल बेद बर बानी । दस दिसि सुनिअ सुमंगल सानी ॥ २ ॥

jaya dhuni bimala bēda bara bānī. dasa disi suni'a sumaṅgala sānī. 2.

The cacophonous sound of enthusiastic applause and joyful cheering, as well as of the chanting of the hymns of the Vedas (the scriptures) could be heard in all the ten directions of the world. (2)

[Note—The ten directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

बिपुल बाजने बाजन लागे । नभ सुर नगर लोग अनुरागे ॥ ३ ॥

bipula bājanē bājana lāgē. nabha sura nagara lōga anurāgē. 3.

Multiple types of musical instruments of different denominations began playing in large numbers simultaneously, while the gods in the heaven and the citizens in the city were all equally euphoric with joy and happiness. (3)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 346.]

बने बराती बरनि न जाहीं । महा मुदित मन सुख न समाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

banē barātī barani na jāhīm. mahā mudita mana sukha na samāhīm. 4.

The members of the bridegroom's party were looking very smart and handsome. All of them were exceedingly cheerful and were so happy that their happiness could not be contained in their hearts. [The demeanours, the facial expressions and the bodily gestures indicated that all the members of the marriage party were exceptionally happy and euphoric. Happiness and joy had overwhelmed them.] (4)

[Note—We have read earlier that when the marriage function of all the brothers was over and Janak had shown his warm respects to the members of the marriage party, all of them were very happy and delighted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 326.

The enthusiasm of the members of the marriage party and the remarkable sense of happiness and joy that they exhibited is vividly depicted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304 which deal with the assembly and departure of the groom's party from Ayodhya.]

पुरबासिन्ह तब राय जोहारे । देखत रामहि भए सुखारे ॥ ५ ॥

purabāsinha taba rāya jōhārē. dēkhata rāmahi bha'ē sukhārē. 5.

Then (when the marriage procession had entered the city lined with exuberant and excited citizens who had lined the city's thoroughfare to welcome the groom, the king, and the rest of the marriage party), when the citizens saw the king (Dasrath), they paid their obeisance to him, and when they saw Lord Ram they felt very happy and blissful. (5)

[Note—The king was leading the procession, and it was customary for the citizens to first pay their respect to their king before they showed respect to others. Then their eyes turned to their favourite prince, Lord Ram, who looked wonderful dressed as a groom. He was the cynosure of all eyes; everyone was gazing at him. But it should be remembered here that it does not mean that they neglected the other brothers: they loved all of them equally, but still Lord Ram was dearest to their hearts amongst the four brothers. It is just like the case of a parent having four children. He or she will love all the children equally, but out of the four siblings one is his or her favourite.

This book "Ram Charit Manas" is dedicated to Lord Ram, and he is the central figure in the story, the hero of the story, the protagonist. Therefore, all attention revolves around him. But nevertheless, they were equally charmed by the sight of the four brothers, and

they had shown equal respect and warm welcome to all the four as would be clear in verse no. 7 herein below.]

करहिं निछावरि मनगन चीरा । बारि बिलोचन पुलक सरीरा ॥ ६ ॥
 आरति करहिं मुदित पुर नारी । हरषहिं निरखि कुअँर बर चारी ॥ ७ ॥
 सिबिका सुभग ओहार उघारी । देखि दुलहिनन्ह होहिं सुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

karahim nichāvari manigana cīrā. bāri bilōcana pulaka sarīrā. 6.
 āraṭi karahim mudita pura nārī. haraṣahim nirakhi ku'amṛa bara cārī. 7.
 sibikā subhaga ōhāra ughārī. dēkhi dulaḥininha hōhim sukhārī. 8.

The citizens warmly and enthusiastically welcomed the grooms (the four princes) and the king (Dasrath) by liberally scattering gifts consisting of gems, clothes etc. around them (to show their happiness and delight). Their eyes were filled with tears of joy and happiness, and their bodies were thrilled with exhilaration. (6)

The men and the women folk of the city performed the “Aarti” of the four princes (Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan) with a delighted heart, and they felt exhilarated when they gazed at the magnificent sight of the four princes (dressed in all their finery as four noble grooms). (7)

Besides feeling delighted at seeing the four grooms, they (the women folk) felt very happy when they courteously lifted or moved aside the curtains covering the windows of the palanquins in which the brides were seated¹, and beheld the latter. (8)

[Note—¹An important deduction can be made here, and it is very obvious from verse no. 8: it is that the ordinary people could get close to the members of the royalty without fear of punishment or rebuke. Though formal protocol was maintained, but the king always ensured that he does not alienate his subjects. Formalities were observed in formal situations such as attendance in the royal court or royal processions, but on other occasions, such as festivals and ceremonies or any other especial occasion in the kingdom and the royal family, the ordinary people were free to mingle with the members of the royal family of the king. This was a great system that created a voluntary sense of loyalty, faithfulness and belonging amongst the subjects of a king. The people felt that their king was very easily accessible, and he was one of them. The king was like the head of a large extended family, and allegiance and loyalty to him was spontaneous and voluntary, not something that was forced upon the citizens by threat of punishment or coercion of any kind. The king was not to be feared but loved and respected.

On earlier occasions too we read that the citizens of Ayodhya had free access to the palace of the king during celebratory times—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 194 at the time of Lord Ram’s birth; and Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that describes how the citizens continuously flowed in and out of the royal palace of Ayodhya in jubilant mood to celebrate and congratulate the royal family when the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in the city.

In spite of the general atmosphere of merriment and informal nature of the interaction between the king’s family and the ordinary citizens at the time when the marriage procession entered the city of Ayodhya, the basic requirements of good manners and customs of the society were observed. So, while the “Aarti” of the four grooms were performed by the men and the women alike, it was only the women-folk who were

allowed to come close to the palanquins carrying the four brides, lift the curtains, and see them.]

दो०. एहि बिधि सबही देत सुखु आए राजदुआर ।
मुदित मातु परिछनि करहिं बधुन्ह समेत कुमार ॥ ३४८ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi sabahī dēta sukhu ā'ē rājadu'āra.
mudita mātu parichani karahim badhunha samēta kumāra. 348.

On this wise, the four princes came to the gates of the royal palace all the while bestowing happiness and joy to all the citizens who had assembled on either side of the road to welcome them.

As soon as they reached the gates of the palace, the euphoric mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) welcomed the four princes and their respective brides¹ most warmly and very affectionately. (Doha no. 348)

[Note—¹How were they welcomed? Well, the answer is in the next verse nos. 1-2 that follow below: by doing their Aarti repeatedly, and giving away different kinds of valuable gifts to whosoever came to receive them.]

चौ०. करहिं आरती बारहिं बारा । प्रेमु प्रमोदु कहै को पारा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

karahim āratī bārahim bārā. prēmu pramōdu kahai kō pārā. 1.

The mothers performed the Aarti of the grooms repeatedly. Who can completely describe the extent of their happiness and joy? [That is, the mothers were not contented by doing the Aarti, waving of lighted lamps in the front of the grooms as a good omen, once. So they did it again and again. They felt so happy and delighted that it is impossible to properly describe their emotions in words.] (1)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 5 also.

When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his 14-year forest exile, the mother (Kaushalya) was thrilled when she saw him and had then performed his Aarti in the same way—repeatedly, and filled with joy. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Earlier in our present narration it has been said that when the bridegrooms' party arrived at Ayodhya, the mothers were so exuberant with joy that they lost awareness of the senses of the physical body so much so that their legs gave way and refused to move though they had wanted to rush forward to embrace their beloved sons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.]

भूषन मनि पट नाना जाती । करहिं निछावरि अगनित भाँती ॥ २ ॥

bhūṣana mani paṭa nānā jāṭī. karahiṁ nichāvari aganita bhāmṭī. 2.

They (the jubilant mothers) offered countless varieties of ornaments, gems, clothes and robes as gifts¹ (to celebrate the home-coming of the four brothers accompanied with their brides). (2)

[Note—¹The exact word used in the verse is “Nichaawari” (निछावरि). It is a custom where gifts are waved in the front of the person who is shown respect and honour, just like doing his Aarti, and then these gifts are scattered all around him. Friends, attendants, and even guests pick these gifts and keep them as memorabilia. Sometimes the people who collect these gifts give them to others or share them amongst themselves. Some of the gifts are scattered on the ground to be picked up at random by alms-seekers, servants and other attendants lower down in the rung of the hierarchy.

Giving of gifts consisting of ornaments and clothes was a standard practice at that time. We have read that Janak had given such gifts at the end of the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 333.

Earlier, such gifts were given and shared by the citizens of Janakpur at the time when Lord Ram had broken the bow to marry Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 262.

More often than not, such gifts were immediately shared by the recipient of the gift with others who could not come at the time when the gift was being given, or because the recipient wishes to share this gift as a token of rejoicing the happy and auspicious moment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.]

बधुन्ह समेत देखि सुत चारी । परमानंद मगन महतारी ॥ ३ ॥

badhunha samēta dēkhi suta cārī. paramānanda magana mahatārī. 3.

Seeing the four sons with their respective brides, the mothers were euphoric with joy so much so that they became overwhelmed with emotions of happiness and ecstasy. (3)

[Note—Refer also to: (a) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha. These latter verses also describe how greatly the mothers were happy and delighted—they had lost awareness of the senses of their bodies and their legs froze because their bodies were exceedingly thrilled.

It ought to be noted that these three things mentioned in these verse nos. 1-3 here—i.e. doing of Aarti, offering of gifts and then scattering them around the four grooms and their brides, and the happiness of the mothers—have happened when the couples had reached the gates of the palace. We shall read below that the same process is repeated once again when the mothers escort them inside the palace and make them sit on thrones for formal offering of respect and worship—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 350 herein below.]

पुनि पुनि सीय राम छबि देखी । मुदित सफल जग जीवन लेखी ॥ ४ ॥

puni puni sīya rāma chabi dēkhī. mudita saphala jaga jīvana lēkhī. 4.

They repeatedly glanced at the lovely face of Lord Ram and the pretty face of Sita, and this view made them so delighted that they felt that they were seeing the fruits of all their meritorious deeds in life in a personified form as Lord Ram and Sita. (4)

[Note—Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109.

When the marriage party had arrived in Ayodhya, the women-folk of the city had similarly gazed at the charming face of Lord Ram and of Sita by lifting the curtain of the palanquin in which she was sitting—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 348.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 5 herein below.]

सखीं सीय मुख पुनि पुनि चाही । गान करहिं निज सुकृत सराही ॥ ५ ॥

sakhīṃ sīya mukha puni puni cāhī. gāna karahīṃ nija sukr̥ta sarāhī. 5.

Not only the mothers, their friends and companions too felt delighted and loved to see the pretty face of Sita repeatedly even as they sang felicitous songs and thanked their good luck as well as the meritorious deeds they may have done in their lives that bestowed them with this reward or privilege. (5)

[Note—Refer Chaupai line no. 4 above.]

बरषहिं सुमन छनहिं छन देवा । नाचहिं गावहिं लावहिं सेवा ॥ ६ ॥

baraṣahīṃ sumana chanahīṃ chana dēvā. nācahīṃ gāvahīṃ lāvahīṃ sēvā. 6.

The gods in the heaven celebrated the occasion by showering flowers every other moment. They and the other celestial damsels danced and sang in the sky to render their service to the Lord in their own unique way. (6)

[Note—The people on earth danced and sang to celebrate the occasion, so the gods did their bit by dancing and singing in the heaven.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 which says that the gods showered flowers from the sky whenever they found a chance.

All throughout the time the marriage rituals were being performed, the gods had been showering flowers. On many an occasion they had played their musical instruments, especially the kettle-drum—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 347.

This was their way of expressing their happiness to see Lord Ram getting married to Sita.]

देखि मनोहर चारिउ जोरीं । सारद उपमा सकल ढँढोरीं ॥ ७ ॥

देत न बनहिं निपट लघु लागीं । एकटक रहीं रूप अनुरागीं ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi manōhara cārī'u jōrīm. sārada upamā sakala ḍhamḍhōrīm. 7.
dēta na banahīm nipaṭa laghu lāgīm. ēkaṭaka rahīm rūpa anurāgīm. 8.

Watching the four pairs of brides and their grooms, goddess Sarada (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge and spoken word) searched everywhere in the world to find a suitable comparison [7], but she failed miserably as she could not find a single example with which to compare the magnificent view she beheld in her front (of the four couples). So finally she gave up and decided to abandon her scholarship, and instead concentrate upon enjoying the sight of the beautiful image before her. So she fixed her gaze on the pretty image of the four pairs of brides and their grooms [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 318 that reiterates that Sarada had failed to describe the delight in the heart of the mother-in-law of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord dressed as a groom.]

दो०. निगम नीति कुल रीति करि अरघ पाँवड़े देत ।
बधुन्ह सहित सुत परिछि सब चलीं लवाइ निकेत ॥ ३४९ ॥

dōhā.

nigama nīti kula rīti kari aragha pām̐varē dēta.
badhunha sahita suta parichi saba calīm lavā'i nikēta. 349.

After doing all the rituals as prescribed in the Vedas and traditionally observed in the family, the mothers escorted the princes and their brides inside the royal palace, offering oblations of water in their front as they walked, and spreading carpets before them as a mark of warm welcome and respect. (Doha no. 349)

[Note—Similar welcome and respect was shown to Lord Ram at the time he had entered the venue of the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 319. However, it was the Lord's mother-in-law who had done it at that time.]

चौ०. चारि सिंघासन सहज सुहाए । जनु मनोज निज हाथ बनाए ॥ १ ॥
तिन्ह पर कुअँरि कुअँर बैठारे । सादर पाय पुनीत पखारे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

cārī siṅghāsana sahaja suhā'ē. janu manōja nija hātha banā'ē. 1.
tinha para ku'am̐ri ku'am̐ra baiṭhārē. sādara pāya punīta pakhārē. 2.

There were four exquisitely crafted thrones that appeared as if they were made by Kamdeo (cupid) with his own hands. (1)

The four princes and princesses were made to sit on them. Then their holy feet were respectfully washed (by the mothers). (2)

[Note—This is a custom in every household that when the son comes home after marriage, his mother and other female relatives wash his feet as well as that of his bride as a sign of their respect for them.

Kamdeo is the patron deity of beauty and glamour, and so when he designs and makes any thing with his own hands he takes care that the product matches his own reputation. He makes sure that whatever he crafts is excellent and the best product as far as its beauty, charm and attractiveness are concerned. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 346.]

धूप दीप नैबेद बेद बिधि । पूजे बर दुलहिनि मंगलनिधि ॥ ३ ॥

dhūpa dīpa naibēda bēda bidhi. pūjē bara dulahini maṅgalanidhi. 3.

The four grooms and their respective brides, who were treasuries of all the good virtues and excellent qualities, were duly worshipped in accordance with the method prescribed by the Vedas by offering incense, showing lighted lamps, and oblations consisting of sweets and fruits. (3)

बारहिं बार आरती करहीं । व्यजन चारु चामर सिर ढरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

बस्तु अनेक निछावरि होहीं । भरीं प्रमोद मातु सब सोहीं ॥ ५ ॥

bārahīm bāra āratī karahīm. byajana cāru cāmara sira ḍharahīm. 4.
bastu anēka nichāvari hōhīm. bharīm pramōda mātu saba sōhīm. 5.

The mothers did their Aarti (waved lighted lamps at them) repeatedly. Hand-held fans and whisks were simultaneously waved near their heads. (4)

A wide variety of things (gifts) were ceremonially offered to the four couples and then scattered around them (so that those present on the occasion could pick these things up as token gifts to celebrate the auspicious occasion). The mothers were overwhelmed with exultation, happiness and joy. (5)

[Note—The same ceremonial welcome by doing Aarti and offering of gifts, and the same happiness of the mothers, has been described a little earlier when the four couples had reached the gates of the royal palace—refer: Doha no. 348 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3 herein above.]

पावा परम तत्व जनु जोगीं । अमृतु लहेउ जनु संतत रोगीं ॥ ६ ॥

जनम रंक जनु पारस पावा । अंधहि लोचन लाभु सुहावा ॥ ७ ॥

मूक बदन जनु सारद छाई । मानहुँ समर सूर जय पाई ॥ ८ ॥

pāvā parama tatva janu jōgīm. amṛtu lahē'u janu santata rōgīm. 6.
janama raṅka janu pārasa pāvā. andhahi lōcana lābhu suhāvā. 7.
mūka badana janu sārada chāī. mānahum̐ samara sūra jaya pāī. 8.

[These three verses describe the extent of happiness and joy of the mothers by making comparisons with other instances which gives immense sense of satisfaction, ecstasy and bliss to the concerned person.]

The mothers were so exceptionally happy and joyous as if an ascetic has attained the ultimate Truth and Essence of all spiritual endeavours (i.e. the ascetic feels ecstatic and exhilarated at having attained the goal of his spiritual pursuit)¹, or as if a chronically ill patient lays his hands on Amrit, the ambrosia of healthy life [6],---

---or as if a person who is impoverished since birth suddenly finds the magical stone that can convert base metal into gold (the 'Paaras Mani' or the philosopher's stone)², or as if a blind person gets the reward of eyesight³ [7],---

---or as if a born-dumb person is blessed by the goddess of fine speech so that he can speak excellently⁴, or as if a warrior becomes victorious in a battle [8]. (6-8)

[Note—Tulsidas has used metaphors extensively to stress any point. An abundance of metaphors and similes are found in Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, from Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17 which describe the natural beauty of the mountain where Lord Ram and Laxman lived during the four months of the rainy season in the kingdom of Kishkindha before the monkey messengers were sent in all the directions to search for Sita.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69 that says that the cooling effect of the shadow of a tree is experienced and enjoyed only by a person who is scorched and tormented by the heat of the sun.

¹Earlier, when Lord Ram had stepped inside the arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was to be held, Tulsidas has said that some of the invited kings who were wise and spiritually inclined had drawn the same kind of immense bliss and joy when they saw the Lord that an ascetic finds upon the realization of the ultimate spiritual Truth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69

Another reference is in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 239 which describes how Bharat felt exceedingly contented and happy when he entered the hermitage of Lord Ram in Chitrakoot as if a hermit or an ascetic has found the ultimate goal of his spiritual pursuit.

²Some of the other instances where attainment of immense happiness is compared to a pauper getting rich are: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102 that says Kewat, the boatman, told Lord Ram when the latter tried to pay the boatman the charges of ferrying him across river Ganges that he (the boatman) has found such immense wealth of happiness that day as if all his poverty down the ages has vanished in an instant, and therefore he does not want anything more. (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238 which says that when Bharat saw the footprints of Lord Ram on the ground as he was going in search of the Lord in the forest, Bharat felt as happy as if a pauper has found the "Paaras Mani".

³When Laxman was given permission by Lord Ram to accompany the latter to the forest, he (Laxman) felt as happy as a blind man getting vision—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 73.

⁴When Bharat found that Lord Ram was pleased with him, the former felt as happy as a dumb man who is blessed with the ability to speak—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

दो०. एहि सुख ते सत कोटि गुन पावहिं मातु अनंदु ।

भाइन्ह सहित बिआहि घर आए रघुकुलचंदु ॥ ३५० (क) ॥

लोक रीति जननीं करहिं बर दुलहिनि सकुचाहिं ।
मोदु बिनोदु बिलोकि बड़ रामु मनहिं मुसुकाहिं ॥ ३५० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ēhi sukha tē sata kōṭi guna pāvahiṁ mātu anandu.
bhā'inha sahita bi'āhi ghara ā'ē raghukulacandu. 350 (a).
lōka rīti jananiṁ karahiṁ bara dulahini sakucāhiṁ.
mōdu binōdu bilōki baṛa rāmu manahiṁ musukāhiṁ. 350 (b).

The mothers derived happiness that was thousands of times more than the joys described above (in verse nos. 6-8). The reason for this exclusive happiness of the mothers, however, was of course that Lord Ram—who was like a moon (i.e. most glorious and eminent member) in the family of king Raghu (i.e. the royal dynasty of Ayodhya)—had come home with his brothers after all of them had been married. (Doha no. 350 Ka.)

The mothers were doing all the customary rites that were to be done according to established traditions even as the grooms and the brides felt abashed and shyful during the proceedings. [These rites were intended to create an informal friendly atmosphere, and remove shyness and inhibitions between the groom and the bride. This helped the newly arrived girl to integrate easily with the groom's family, to feel at home and become friendly with all the members of her in-law's family.]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram subtly smiled to himself wryly as he watched the merriment and and ecstasy of the occasion. (Doha no. 350 Kha.)

[Note—Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being. He was actually above such worldly emotions of being happy and ecstatic, for the Lord remained dispassionate, detached and neutral. He smiled wryly because he marveled at the power of his Maya (delusion creating powers of the Lord) that had made the mothers think that their sons have 'married'. In fact, Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, had never separated from his divine consort goddess Laxmi who had revealed herself as Sita when the Lord decided to come down to earth to serve the cause of the gods, which was to eliminate the demons and to end their cruelty. It was simply a "re-union", and not a "new relationship".

Another reason for Lord Ram smiling wryly is that he knew that all this happiness and merriment was short-lived because shortly the developments would take a turn when he would have to go to the forest when all this happiness would turn into grief and sorrow.

The happiness of the mothers was superficial and not deep-seated. It was limited to the happenings of the gross world. This is because when the Lord would go to the forest, the same mother Kaushalya would start grieving and lamenting—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 57. On the other hand, the news that king Dasrath was compelled to send Lord Ram to the forest for 14 years due to some earlier promise he had made to his queen Kaikeyi had had no effect on the Lord—the reason being that the Lord was naturally blissful and happy, he was internally neutral to all emotions of either joy or sorrow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41, and Doha no. 51. Lord Ram had subtly smiled on this occasion also—refer specifically to Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 41.]

चौ०. देव पितर पूजे बिधि नीकी । पूजिं सकल बासना जी की ॥ १ ॥
 सबहि बंदि मागहिं बरदाना । भाइन्ह सहित राम कल्याना ॥ २ ॥
 अंतरहित सुर आसिष देहीं । मुदित मातु अंचल भरि लेहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

dēva pitara pūjē bidhi nīkī. pūjīm sakala bāsanā jī kī. 1.
 sabahi bandi māgahim baradānā. bhā'inha sahita rāma kalyānā. 2.
 antarahita sura āsiṣa dēhīm. mudita mātu aṅcala bhari lēhīm. 3.

The mothers affectionately offered their worship and respect to the gods and spirits of ancestors by whose blessings all the desires of their hearts were fulfilled¹. (1)

They prayed to all of them (i.e. all the gods and ancestors) to seek their blessings, requesting them to be benevolent, kind and munificent towards Lord Ram and his brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan). (2)

The gods and holy spirits obliged the mothers by sincerely blessings the four brothers profusely even as the mothers accepted these blessings in a symbolic manner by spreading the ends of their garments². (3)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 190.

¹A mother's most cherished dream is to see her beloved son married to a suitable girl. In this case, by the grace of the gods and the blessings of the spirits of ancestors, not only Lord Ram but all his other three brothers too were married to the most beautiful princesses of that time. It was like a boon multiplied many times over. This filled the heart of the three mothers, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, with exultation and euphoria of the highest kind. They wished to profusely thank and express their heart-felt gratitude to the gods and the ancestors by worshipping them and praying to them.

²When someone begs for something he spreads his hands before the giver. Similarly, when the mothers sought blessings from the gods and spirits of ancestors for their four sons they spread the end of their garments as a symbolic gesture of accepting these blessings.]

भूपति बोलि बराती लीन्हे । जान बसन मनि भूषन दीन्हे ॥ ४ ॥
 आयसु पाइ राखि उर रामहि । मुदित गए सब निज निज धामहि ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpati bōli barātī līnhē. jāna basana mani bhūṣana dīnhē. 4.
 āyasu pā'i rākhi ura rāmahi. mudita ga'e saba nija nija dhāmahi. 5.

Meanwhile, the king (Dasrath) invited all the members of the marriage party to thank them and honouring them with gifts of vehicles, clothes, ceremonial robes, gems and ornaments¹. (4)

After that (i.e. after receiving gifts and honours from the king as a token of formal farewell) all of them enshrined the beautiful image of Lord Ram in their hearts and went back to their homes joyfully. (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Janki Mangal, verse no. 191.]

It was, and still is, customary to say good-bye to guests by giving them gifts. We see the same procedure in Uttar Kand when Lord Ram had bid good-bye to his friends, the senior monkeys such as Angad and Sugriv, the bear king Jamvant, the demon king Vibhishan, and the head of the boatmen community called Nishad, who all had come to Ayodhya with the Lord when he returned at the end of his 14 years of forest exile and his successful campaign at Lanka. We also see that at the time of their departure for their homes, Lord Ram had requested all of them to keep him in their hearts as a token of remembrance and a bond of eternal friendship. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 16—to Doha no. 17 Ka; and Doha no. 18 Kha.]

पुर नर नारि सकल पहिराए । घर घर बाजन लगे बधाए ॥ ६ ॥

pura nara nāri sakala pahirā'ē. ghara ghara bājana lagē badhā'ē. 6.

Not only were the invited guests who had gone with the marriage party (to Janakpur) honoured by gifting of robes and clothes, the kings had also honoured the men and the women of the city by giving them robes of honour¹.

Musical instruments were played and felicitous songs were sung in each household of the city to celebrate² the occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and his three brothers. (6)

[Note—¹The king was very generous and magnanimous because whenever he decided to give gifts, he did it liberally with an open heart and without distinction. He ensured that his subjects were kept happy and contented, and they never felt discriminated against or alienated from the higher echelons of the society or from the royal family. There are ample instances of the citizens receiving gifts from the king or the queens directly and personally—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 295—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha at the time when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya.

²Playing of musical instruments and singing of auspicious songs in every household whenever there was any good development is narrated on many other occasions also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 194 at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 296 at the time when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya.

This showed that all the citizens of the kingdom shared the joys of the royal family equally, and there was a sort of community feeling and bonhomies amongst the people. After all, the happiness of the people was what a good king wanted, and the subjects of a noble king loved him so much and reciprocated the king's love for them by sharing the king's sorrow and happiness as if it was their own affair. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100; Doha no. 37 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it; from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 49; and Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 156 (at the time of Dasrath's death).]

जाचक जन जाचहिं जोड़ जोई । प्रमुदित राउ देहिं सोड़ सोई ॥ ७ ॥
 सेवक सकल बजनिआ नाना । पूरन किए दान सनमाना ॥ ८ ॥

jācaka jana jācahiṃ jō'i jō'ī. pramudita rā'u dēhiṃ sō'i sō'ī. 7.
 sēvaka sakala bajani'ā nānā. pūrana ki'ē dāna sanamānā. 8.

Whatever was desired by those who came to accept gifts from the king were cheerfully and liberally given whatever they had wanted. The king did not hesitate in satisfying any of them¹. (7)

The king satiated all the servants, attendants and musicians by giving away whatever gifts they wanted and bestowing upon them honours in accordance to their ranks and services so much so that all of them were fully contented and happy. (8)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 326 which says that king Dasrath had liberally given away whatever was sought as gifts by all those who came to seek them from him at the end of the marriage rituals of the four brothers at Janakpur.

Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 where a similar idea is expressed, and the occasion was the birth of Lord Ram at Ayodhya.]

दो०. देहिं असीस जोहारि सब गावहिं गुन गन गाथ ।
 तब गुर भूसुर सहित गृहं गवनु कीन्ह नरनाथ ॥ ३५१ ॥

dōhā.

dēhiṃ asīsa jōhāri saba gāvahiṃ guna gana gātha.
 taba gura bhūsura sahita gr̥ham' gavanu kīnha naranātha. 351.

All those who received gifts and honours saluted the king, blessed him and praised his glories with a loud chorus.

After that, the king proceeded to the palace, accompanied by his guru (sage Vasistha) and other Brahmins¹. (Doha no. 351.)

[Note—¹The gifts and other honours were given by the king to the guests, the alms-seekers, the servants, the attendants and the musicians etc. outside the gates of the royal palace. When the king entered the palace, he was accompanied by his guru and many other Brahmins. Though it is not specifically mentioned here, one of them was sage Vishwamitra. It will be clear later on when the sage is singled out for special thanks and honours by the king as well as Lord Ram personally in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 359; and Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 360.]

चौ०. जो बसिष्ट अनुसासन दीन्ही । लोक बेद बिधि सादर कीन्ही ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jō basiṣṭa anusāsana dīnhī. lōka bēda bidhi sādara kīnhī. 1.

Whatever instructions were given by sage Vasistha, all were diligently and respectfully followed (by the king, Dasrath) in accordance with the laid-down procedure established by tradition in the society and prescribed by the Vedas (scriptures). (1)

[Note—King Dasrath had consulted his guru, sage Vasistha, on every important occasion. Since the sage was the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, he had presided over all the rituals of marriage at Janakpur on behalf of the royal family of Ayodhya, and oversaw the rites when the grooms returned home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 359; and Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 325.

All the rituals were done in accordance with the established norms and traditions of the society as well as in the way prescribed in the Veda—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 349.

Earlier, during the actual marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and his brothers, the same system of obeying the edicts of the Vedas and following established traditions was observed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 323; (iii) Chanda line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 324; and (iv) Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327.]

भूसुर भीर देखि सब रानी । सादर उठीं भाग्य बड़ जानी ॥ २ ॥

पाय पखारि सकल अन्हवाए । पूजि भली बिधि भूप जेवाँए ॥ ३ ॥

आदर दान प्रेम परिपोषे । देत असीस चले मन तोषे ॥ ४ ॥

bhūsura bhīra dēkhi saba rānī. sādara uṭhīm bhāgya baṛa jānī. 2.

pāya pakhāri sakala anhvā'ē. pūji bhalī bidhi bhūpa jēvāmē. 3.

ādara dāna prēma paripōṣē. dēta asīsa calē mana tōṣē. 4.

When the queens saw the crowd of Brahmins, literally the “honourable gods of earth” (who had accompanied the king when he had entered the inner part of the palace as narrated in Doha no. 351), they got up to greet these Brahmins and to show their respects to them, regarding their (Brahmin’s) visit as their (queens’) good fortune. (2)

Then they (the queens as well as the king) duly washed the feet of these respected Brahmins (as a gesture of showing respect to them), and helped them to do their ablutions. After that, the king duly worshipped them (the Brahmins) in all possible ways, and then served them food so that they could be fully satisfied with their meal. (3)

The Brahmins were fully satisfied with the respect and honour, the gifts and donations, as well as the love and affections that was shown to them (by the king and the queens), and thus contented and happy, they profusely blessed the royals and went their ways. (4)

[Note—Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 189.

We have read earlier in Doha no. 351 that after seeing off the rest of the guests who had accompanied the marriage party of Lord Ram, as well as the citizens of Ayodhya at

the gates of the palace, the king had entered the palace along with the Brahmins and his guru. When the queens saw the king coming inside the palace with the honourable Brahmins, they immediately got up and paid their obeisance to the Brahmins. It is customary to first honour the Brahmins by washing their feet with the idea that they represent the gods of heaven on earth. Worshipping them is regarded as being equivalent to worshipping the gods. This is done by washing the feet of the Brahmins, and then helping them in their ritualistic ablutions. This usually involves a symbolic sprinkling of water on the body and changing into new or washed clothes. After this is done, the Brahmins are fed properly with the best of food that the host can offer. Finally, the Brahmins are given gifts before they are seen off. The Brahmins, on their part, bless the host.

Another important point is that usually these Brahmins came to the king in groups and were accompanied by their chief, sage Vasistha—for instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Whenever the Brahmins were invited by the king, they were duly worshipped—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 197 where we read that when king Dasrath invited sage Vasistha to baptise and give names to the four sons, the king had duly worshipped the sage.

This worship included “washing of the feet” and “feeding the guest”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 207 when king Dasrath had washed the feet of sage Vishwamitra and fed him excellent meal at the time when the great sage had gone to the king with a request that Lord Ram and Laxman be sent with him to his hermitage so that the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice could be eliminated.

Washing of feet of an honoured guest, repeatedly bowing the head before him to show one’s respect, and offering something to eat as a means of refreshment is an old tradition and method of hospitality since time immemorial. When Lord Ram had visited the old woman devotee Sabari in the forest, she too had brought water and washed the Lord’s feet, and then offered fruits for refreshment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 34 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10.

Another tradition was to call a large group of Brahmins whenever there was some good event or news, and give liberal gifts to them. The satisfied Brahmins on their part profusely blessed the giver of gifts. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 295 which describes that at the time the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in Ayodhya, the queens summoned all the Brahmins and gave them abundant gifts.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 330—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 331.

This practice of a king moving with a group of Brahmins was followed in Janakpur also as we read that when king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at Janakpur, the king was accompanied by a large delegation of Brahmins—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.

We also read in this context that king Janak had showed his respects to all the sages who accompanied sage Vishwamitra by bowing his head to them, and the sages had blessed him, which made the king feel exceptionally blessed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 215.]

बहु बिधि कीन्हि गाधिसुत पूजा । नाथ मोहि सम धन्य न दूजा ॥ ५ ॥

कीन्हि प्रसंसा भूपति भूरी । रानिन्ह सहित लीन्हि पग धूरी ॥ ६ ॥

bahu bidhi kīnhi gādhisuta pūjā. nātha mōhi sama dhan'ya na dūjā. 5.
kīnhi prasansā bhūpati bhūrī. rāninha sahita līnhi paga dhūrī. 6.

[The king felt especially obliged and grateful to sage Vishwamitra because all the happiness and joy associated with the marriage of the four princes was due to this sage. Had Vishwamitra not taken Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony, had he not given permission to Lord Ram to go to the royal garden where the Lord met Sita for the first time, had he not blessed Lord Ram that his internal desire to marry Sita would be fulfilled, had he not ordered Lord Ram to break the bow when all other kings and princes had failed, and once the bow was broken and the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita finalised, had he not ordered that king Dasrath be invited with his other sons, the wave of happiness that has today submerged the city of Ayodhya and overwhelmed the royal family would not have come to happen.]

Therefore, the king wished to show his special regards for sage Vishwamitra and offer his personal obeisance to him separately as narrated in these three verses.]

The obliged king offered his special regards and thanks to sage Vishwamitra (known as “Gaadhi-sut” as he was the son of sage Gaadhi) by worshipping him in many different ways. [That is, the king repeatedly worshipped the sage as he did not feel satisfied by a single formal worship. It was done to express the king’s heart-felt emotions of thanks and a sense of profound obligations towards the sage.]

The king then politely submitted—‘Oh revered sage! No one else is as lucky and privileged in the world as I am today. [It is because for two primary reasons: one, I am able to personally worship you today, and secondly, all my sons have been married not due to any efforts made by me or their own efforts, but as a blessing of a sage of your repute and mystical powers. Who else in this world is so lucky that you would be so kind upon him? I had not even invited you to come to Ayodhya, but you came to me voluntarily to take Ram away to your hermitage. The events that followed—liberation of Ahilya, and the killing of Tadka and other demons named Marich and Subahu who were defiling your fire sacrifice, and finally the breaking of the formidable bow which put to shame the strength and valour of all the mighty kings and princes of the world—helped establish the fame and reputation of my son Ram in the world, and all this happened due to your mercy and graciousness. Besides this, you have taught my sons, Sri Ram and Laxman, certain martial skills that are only known by you, and how could my sons have learnt them if you hadn’t taught these to them?]

Oh respected sage, to be frank, these marvellous achievements wouldn’t have been possible at all had you not been exceptionally gracious upon me and my sons. How can I not recognise this blessing of yours? Who else has got this blessing anywhere else in this creation? So, am I not exceptionally blessed and lucky?

A sage of your reputation and mystical powers first took the trouble to come down walking all the way from your far-away hermitage to my kingdom, then you had showered fatherly love upon my two beloved sons, Sri Ram and Laxman, and then you had taught them excellent skills of warfare and use of weapons as well as how to conquer hunger and thirst during the long ordeal of the battle-field, and then got my sons married, and finally took time off from your spiritual pursuits to come to Ayodhya instead of

going back to your hermitage directly from Janakpur. How can I not acknowledge all this?]¹ (5)

The king profusely praised the sage in manifold ways, and then he, along with his queens, accepted the dust of the revered sage's feet (to show his greatest respect and reverence for the great sage)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 32 where king Janak had too worshipped sage Vishwamitra with special attention.

²Accepting the dust of a sage's feet, especially if the sage happened to be one's guru, is a great way of achieving all sorts of successes in this world. King Dasrath has acknowledged this clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3.]

भीतर भवन दीन्ह बर बासू । मन जोगवत रह नृपु रनिवासू ॥ ७ ॥

bhītara bhavana dīnha bara bāsū. mana jōgavata raha nrpu ranivāsū. 7.

The king lodged the sage (Vishwamitra) in an excellent quarter inside his own palace, and all the members of the king's family, including his queens and other relatives, were on their toes to take care of the wishes and comforts of the revered guest-sage (for as long as he wished to stay there). (7)

[Note—As we have observed above in the note accompanying verse nos. 4-6 herin above, the king was highly obliged to sage Vishwamitra, and the sage was his special guest-of-honour. So it is natural that all the best of royal care and services were extended for the comfort of the sage.

Another important point to note is that king Dasrath had first worshipped sage Vishwamitra, and only after that did he worship his own guru sage Vasistha as will be clear in the next verse no. 8. This clearly shows that the king wished to say a special “thanks” to sage Vishwamitra.

The sage was given residence inside the royal palace of the king to stress that he was a special guest-of-honour whom the king and the queens wanted to serve personally, and not leave this service to other royal attendants. When a close friend or relative or someone who is very close and dear comes to visit, the guest is accommodated in one's own house and not in a hotel. Hence, sage Vishwamitra was given residence in the king's personal home, the palace, instead of the royal guest-house.

Besides this consideration, another reason to lodge the sage inside the palace was that he was an outsider who lived in a far-away hermitage, and was not a resident of Ayodhya like sage Vasistha. Perhaps the official royal guest-house's rooms were occupied by other sages, Brahmins and elders who were invited by the king on the occasion of the marriage of his sons, which is quite probable and practical. Hence, the king decided to lodge sage Vishwamitra inside his own palace to show special respect to him and to tell the sage that he is a distinguished guest.]

पूजे गुर पद कमल बहोरी । कीन्हि बिनय उर प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

pūjē gura pada kamala bahōrī. kīnhi binaya ura prīti na thōrī. 8.

The king then worshipped the lotus-like (i.e. revered) feet of his guru, sage Vasistha, and prayed to him with affection that was no less than the affection that the king had for sage Vishwamitra. (8)

[Note—It was very vital for the king to emphasise upon his guru, sage Vasistha, that he has great respect for the latter, and that the guru should not take umbrage at the king first worshipping sage Vishwamitra. The king and his family had the greatest of regards for sage Vasistha—this is clear in Doha no. 352 below.

Sage Vasistha was a ‘resident’ guru whom the king could meet as many times as he wanted, while sage Vishwamitra was a ‘visiting’ guru who would go away soon and the king would not be able to meet him for a long time again. So therefore, the ‘guest guru’ needed to be shown special privileges, but this does not mean that the king has any lesser regard for guru Vasistha.

Sage Vasistha was a wise man, and so he fully understood the stand of the king. This will be clear when he blessed the entire royal family—refer Doha no. 352, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it herein below.]

दो०. बधुन्ह समेत कुमार सब रानिन्ह सहित महीसु।
पुनि पुनि बंदत गुर चरन देत असीस मुनीसु॥ ३५२ ॥

dōhā.

badhunha samēta kumāra saba rāninha sahita mahīsu.
puni puni bandata gura carana dēta asīsa munīsu. 352.

All the princes (Lord Ram and his brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan) and their respective brides (Sita, Maandavi, Urmila and Srutkirti respectively), as well as the king (Dasrath) along with all his queens (Kaushaly, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) repeatedly offered their respects at the feet of the guru (sage Vasistha) even as the sage liberally blessed all of them in return. (Doha no. 352)

[Note—As has been observed in a note appended to verse no. 8 herein above, the king ensured that his guru, sage Vasistha, did not feel offended by the king first worshipping the guest sage Vishwamitra. So, while it is not mentioned that the four princes and their brides had offered their worship to sage Vishwamitra, when the turn of worshipping sage Vasistha came, the entire royal family took part. This pleased Vasistha and he reciprocated by blessing the royal family. Refer also verse nos. 1-2 below.

The importance of honouring one’s guru and holding him in high regards is emphasised by sage Valmiki when he told Lord Ram that the Lord should live in the heart of a person who respects his guru more than anyone else—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 129.

Even king Janak had the greatest of respect for sage Vasistha, and revered him like a family deity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 320.

Repeatedly bowing the head before the guru or any senior person is a sign of showing the highest respect to him and expecting blessings in return—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 359 below in this narrative where we shall read that when the two sages Vasistha and

Vishwamitra arrived in the court of king Dasrath, he had worshipped their feet and paid his obeisance to them along with his four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers.]

चौ०. बिनय कीन्हि उर अति अनुरागें । सुत संपदा रखि सब आगें ॥ १ ॥
नेगु मागि मुनिनायक लीन्हि । आसिरबादु बहुत बिधि दीन्हि ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

binaya kīnhi ura ati anurāgēm. suta sampadā rākhi saba āgēm. 1.
nēgu māgi munināyaka līnhā. āsirabādu bahuta bidhi dīnhā. 2.

The king prayed to sage Vasistha with a lot of affection overflowing in his heart, and symbolically submitted himself to the grace of the great sage by placing all his sons and the wealth of the kingdom (in a token manner) before him¹. (1)

The chief amongst the sages (“munināyaka”; i.e. sage Vasistha) however asked for and accepted only his formal share of gifts that are traditionally given to celebrate and commemorate an auspicious occasion (which in this case is the marriage of the four princes).

Having received these gifts, the gracious sage blessed them (the king, the queens, and their four sons with their brides) in many a ways. (2)

[Note—¹The king has shown the same gesture for sage Vishwamitra at the time of the latter’s departure for his hermitage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 360.

The king wished to give many things as gift, but both these sages, i.e. Vishwamitra and Vasistha, only accepted token gifts because they were not greedy.]

उर धरि रामहि सीय समेता । हरषि कीन्हि गुर गवनु निकेता ॥ ३ ॥

ura dhari rāmahi sīya samētā. haraṣi kīnha gura gavanu nikētā. 3.

The guru (sage Vasistha) enshrined the image of Lord Ram along with Sita in his heart, and then cheerfully went home. (3)

[Note—There is a remarkable angle to this verse when viewed from the perspective of devotion and spiritualism. When the two verse nos. 2-3 are read together, the meaning that comes out clearly is that sage Vasistha was cheerful only when he enshrined the image of Lord Ram and Sita in his heart, and not because the king had shown him great respect by placing his wealth before him. The reason is that sage Vasistha was the son of Brahma, the creator, and he knew that Lord Ram was in fact Lord Vishnu in a human form, and Sita was goddess Laxmi. Vasistha was not at all interested in material wealth, but his sole pursuit was spiritual bliss. He has clearly told Lord Ram that initially he had declined to become a priest, but when his father, Brahma the creator, told him that if he did so he will have the rarest of rare privilege to serve the Supreme Being incarnated as Lord Ram, he had gladly accepted this job—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

That is why the enlightened sage Vasistha felt delighted when he enshrined the image of Lord Ram and Sita in his heart.]

बिप्रबधू सब भूप बोलाई । चैल चारु भूषण पहिराई ॥ ४ ॥
 बहुरि बोलाइ सुआसिनि लीन्हीं । रुचि बिचारि पहिरावनि दीन्हीं ॥ ५ ॥
 नेगी नेग जोग सब लेहीं । रुचि अनुरूप भूपमनि देहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रिय पाहुने पूज्य जे जाने । भूपति भली भाँति सनमाने ॥ ७ ॥

biprabadhū saba bhūpa bōlā'īm. caila cāru bhūṣana pahirā'īm. 4.
 bahuri bōlā'i su'āsini līnhīm. ruci bicāri pahirāvani dīnhīm. 5.
 nēgī nēga jōga saba lēhīm. ruci anurūpa bhūpamani dēhīm. 6.
 priya pāhunē pūjya jē jānē. bhūpati bhalī bhāmṭi sanamānē. 7.

The king next called all the wives of the Brahmins, and duly honoured them by giving them wonderful robes and wearing apparels. (4)

After them, the king summoned all other honourable ladies of the city and gave them clothes according to their choices and wishes. (5)

All of them requested the king to give them gifts that are traditionally given on the occasion of ceremonies, and the king gladly gave them whatever they wished¹. (6)

Then the king properly honoured the rest of the guests whom he thought were qualified for special respect. [Who were they? These guests were the junior Brahmins or sages who had come from all the corners of the great kingdom, from far and near, when they had heard that the marriage party has arrived at Ayodhya. So the king honoured all of them.] (7)

[Note—Thus we see that king Dasrath honoured everyone who came to meet him and bless the newly married princes.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 189—192.

¹We have read earlier that the king gave away gold, clothes, gems, horses, elephants and chariots according to the desire of the recipient—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 331.]

देव देखि रघुबीर बिबाहू । बरषि प्रसून प्रसंसि उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

dēva dēkhi raghubīra bibāhū. baraṣi prasūna prasansi uchāhū. 8.

The gods watched the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and rained flowers (from the heaven), praising the celebrations, the happiness and the ecstasy that accompanied it. (8)

दो०. चले निसान बजाइ सुर निज निज पुर सुख पाइ ।
 कहत परसपर राम जसु प्रेम न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ ३५३ ॥

dōhā.

calē nisāna bajā'i sura nija nija pura sukha pā'i.
kahata parasapara rāma jasu prēma na hr̥dayam̐ samā'i. 353.

The gods played their kettle-drums and went to their respective heavenly abodes. All along the way they animatedly talked about and lauded the glories of Lord Ram with an immense amount of love and affection in their hearts so much so that this emotion could not be contained in and it virtually overflowed from their hearts. (Doha no. 353)

[Note—The gods were the last ones to take leave and return home. They were all overwhelmed with emotions, were ecstatic with joy, and felt nostalgic all the way back to their heavenly abodes. They could not refrain themselves from praising the glories of Lord Ram, animatedly discussing amongst themselves the fine qualities of the Lord, and were lost in the memory of the great events that they had witnessed and would cherish for the rest of their lives in heaven.]

चौ०. सब बिधि सबहि समदि नरनाहू । रहा हृदयँ भरि पूरि उछाहू ॥ १ ॥

caupā'i.

saba bidhi sabahi samadi naranāhū. rahā hr̥dayam̐ bhari pūri uchāhū. 1.

Having shown everyone all possible respects and honours, the king's heart felt contented and overjoyed. (1)

[Note—We shall read below that till this point of time, the king was engaged in formalities that were to be done—receiving and honouring guests, the ordinary citizens as well as the sages and Brahmins. Once this was over, he retired to his private quarters of the palace to sit with his family and enjoy some private moments of peace and relaxation. The following verse nos. 2-8 and Doha no. 354 that follow them narrate these moments.]

जहँ रनिवासु तहाँ पगु धारे । सहित बहूटिन्ह कुअँर निहारे ॥ २ ॥
लिए गोद करि मोद समेता । को कहि सकइ भयउ सुखु जेता ॥ ३ ॥
बधू सप्रेम गोद बैठारीं । बार बार हियँ हरषि दुलारीं ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ ranivāsu tahām̐ pagu dhārē. sahita bahūṭinha ku'am̐ra nihārē. 2.
li'ē gōda kari mōda samētā. kō kahi saka'i bhaya'u sukhu jētā. 3.
badhū saprēma gōda baiṭhārīṁ. bāra bāra hiyam̐ haraṣi dulārīṁ. 4.

Then the king stepped inside the private quarters of his palace (where the queens and the newly arrived brides lived)¹. There he beheld the four princes (his sons) alongside their respective brides. (2)

Feeling blessed and exhilarated, he sat the four young princes affectionately on his lap². Say, who can ever narrate the degree of satisfaction and joys the king experienced at that time. [That is, when the king showed his love and affection for his

newly married sons by making them sit on his lap, there was no limit of his happiness, joy and contentedness, and it is not possible to assign any measurement to it.] (3)

The king also made his daughters-in-law³ sit with their respective grooms on his lap (to show equal affection and love for them). Feeling exhilarated in his heart, the overjoyed king (the father of the sons and the father-in-law of the brides) expressed his affection for all of them by various gestures of endearment. (4)

[Note—¹This shows that the residential quarters of the queens were separate from the rest of the royal palace. All formal functions and receptions were done in the front part of the palace or a separate palace where the king lived, while the female members lived in a separate or adjacent part of the sprawling complex. The newly married brides were lodged under the care of their mothers-in-law, the three queens (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi). This is why the king saw his “daughters-in-law” here, and not earlier when the queens had worshipped the Brahmins etc. as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 352.

This deduction—that the king’s personal residential quarter was separate from that of his queens—is also based on Baal Kand’s Doha no. 355 below where it is said that after giving instructions that the children be allowed to retire and go to bed as they are feeling sleepy (because they must be tired), the king went away to his “own” palace.

²⁻³A father sits his son and daughter on his lap as a gesture of great love and affection for his children, and there is nothing wrong in it. For Dasrath, the brides were like his daughters, and since he did not have any daughter of his own (because he had only four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan), the four young brides filled this gap in his life and he got a god-sent opportunity to shower his love on them to fulfill his heart’s desire that longed for a daughter.

Dasrath felt very blessed as now he has four loving sons and four equally loving daughters. He doted upon them with diligence, and “sitting on the lap” is a gesture of extreme affection that a parent exhibits for his or her child.]

देखि समाजु मुदित रनिवासू । सब केँ उर अनंद कियो बासू ॥ ५ ॥

dēkhi samāju mudita ranivāsū. saba kēṁ ura ananda kiyō bāsū. 5.

The ladies of the palace were delighted to behold this spectacle (of the king sitting on a throne with his four sons and four daughters-in-law seated affectionately on his lap, and he fondly expressing his affection for the four couples). Everyone’s heart became an abode of happiness and joy. (5)

कहेउ भूप जिमि भयउ बिबाहू । सुनि सुनि हरषु होत सब काहू ॥ ६ ॥

जनक राज गुन सीलु बड़ाई । प्रीति रीति संपदा सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

बहुबिधि भूप भाट जिमि बरनी । रानीं सब प्रमुदित सुनि करनी ॥ ८ ॥

kahē'u bhūpa jimi bhaya'u bibāhū. suni suni haraṣu hōta saba kāhū. 6.

janaka rāja guna sīlu baṛā'ī. prīti rīti sampadā suhā'ī. 7.

bahubidhi bhūpa bhāṭa jimi baranī. rānīm saba pramudita suni karanī. 8.

The overwhelmed and overjoyed king described to the queens and other female members of the royal household (who had stayed back at Ayodhya and were eager to hear how the marriage function was held at Janakpur) the details of the way the marriage ceremony was organised. All of them (the queens and other members) became thrilled and exhilarated as they heard the detailed narration. (6)

King Dasrath was so overwhelmed by the intensity of affection shown by king Janak as well as by the friendly, amiable and courteous nature of the latter that he paid rich tributes to Janak by enthusiastically describing his excellent qualities, his fine virtues, his good manners, his magnificence and glories, his expression of affection and friendliness, his wealth, prosperity and opulence, and everything that was beautiful about him (as a gesture of expressing his own gratitude, respect and honour for king Janak, and simultaneously narrating the events at Janakpur for the benefit of the queens and other members of the royal household who did not accompany the marriage party to Janakpur, but were nevertheless very eager to hear what had happened there). (7)

The glowing tributes that Dasrath enthusiastically paid to honour Janak and laud his noble virtues and great glories in flowering terms made it appear as the former was a bard and a minstrel of Janak, and was on the pay-roll of the latter!

The queens felt delighted when they heard all that had happened in the course of the marriage ceremony of the four brothers, as well as of the glorious deeds of king Janak. (8)

[Note—It is certainly a sincere and honest praise when one praises another person behind his back. King Dasrath did not praise Janak in public because it would seem merely a formal expression of honour from one king for another. This was a private moment, and his lauding Janak and his excellent qualities before the members of his family showed that Dasrath was indeed overwhelmed by Janak's lovable nature and excellent qualities. This also shows that Dasrath did not regret this relationship with Janak.

Other aspects of this praise are these: (a) The four daughters-in-law were seated very near to Dasrath (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 herein above), and they were hearing all that Dasrath said. Praising Janak profusely and expressing great satisfaction at the reception accorded to the marriage party at Janakpur as well as the conduct of the entire marriage ceremony signalled to the brides that they are warmly welcome in their new homes, and that their in-laws were very happy and satisfied with this new relationship. This was essential to build self-confidence in the four young brides who had stepped out of their homes for the first time in their lives, and who longed for love and affection that their own father, king Janak and his bother Kushdhvaj, had shown them all along. Praising Janak in great abundance not only instilled a sense of confidence in the brides and made them feel that they are amongst friendly people who cherish the new relationship and are satisfied with it, but also that their adopted family is honourable and knows how to show respect to others. They aren't selfish, rude or snobbish by nature—criticising others behind their backs and sneering at things that are done and finished.

(b) The wise king subtly hinted to all the members of the royal household, the queens as well as the rest of them that he was extremely happy with this alliance, and that king Janak was a reputed and well-established king. Therefore, the four brides should be treated with great respect and dignity that they deserve as princesses of a great kingdom, and they should never be allowed to feel insulted or home-sick.

This will be clear below in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 355.]

दो०. सुतन्ह समेत नहाइ नृप बोलि बिप्र गुर ग्याति ।

भोजन कीन्ह अनेक बिधि घरी पंच गइ राति ॥ ३५४ ॥

dōhā.

sutanha samēta nahā'i nrpa bōli bipra gura gyāti.
bhōjana kīnha anēka bidhi gharī pañca ga'i rāti. 354.

After this narration (as described in the forgoing verses), the king and his sons bathed. Then the king summoned the Brahmins, his guru (sage Vasistha), and elders of the society. He sat down together with them and ate a sumptuous meal consisting of a large variety of delectable dishes till 'five Gharis' of the night passed. [Technically, 1 Ghari = approximately 24 minutes; but generally the word means "a suitable time". Hence, "five Gharis" means 5 x 24 minutes = 120 minutes = 2 hours. Or that a suitable time of the night passed in feasting.] (Doha no. 354)

[Noted—The "five Gharis of the night" indicates that roughly 2 hours were spent by the king and his four sons in eating their first meal after returning from Janakpur, and that the feast was held late in the night, and not in the evening hours. This conclusion is based on the fact that soon we shall read that the king had ordered that proper arrangements must be made to let the "children" go to bed and sleep as they were sleepy, and therefore must be tired—refer: Doha no. 355. Then the king himself went away to his palace.

It ought to be noted here that this meal is the only one mentioned after the marriage party returned from Janakpur. It was therefore a formal feast that the king organized for the Brahmins, his guru and other elders of the kingdom. The proof of this meal being a formal feast organized by the king to celebrate the occasion of the return of the marriage party with the brides and the grooms lies in the fact that felicitous songs were sung by female members of the royal household as the feast was underway—refer Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. मंगलगान करहिं बर भामिनि । भै सुखमूल मनोहर जामिनि ॥ १ ॥
अँचइ पान सब काहूँ पाए । स्त्रग सुगंध भूषित छबि छाए ॥ २ ॥
रामहि देखि रजायसु पाई । निज निज भवन चले सिर नाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

maṅgalagāna karahiṁ bara bhāmini. bhai sukhamūla manōhara jāmini. 1.
am̐ca'i pāna saba kāhūṁ pā'ē. sraga sugandha bhūṣita chabi chā'ē. 2.
rāmahi dēkhi rajāyasu pā'ī. nija nija bhavana calē sira nā'ī. 3.

As the feast was underway, the lovely female members of the royal household sang auspicious songs of felicitation. This gave the night an aura of enchantment and merriment as if it was a receptacle of happiness and joy. (1)

Everyone (i.e. the king, his four sons, and the invited guests—the Brahmins, the guru and the elders of the society) was offered water to wash their hands and rinse their mouths. Betel-leaves were then served as mouth-freshner. Then they were all adorned

with garlands and honoured by offering perfumes such as sandalwood and other types of scents. (2)

The invited guest at the meal once again looked at their beloved Lord Ram and taking permission from the king all of them went away to their respective homes. (3)

[Note—This was a private feast and not a public banquet as the one that was held at Janakpur where all the members of the marriage party were invited and fed a sumptuous meal—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 328—to Doha no. 329.

Excepting this, the rest was the same—the variety of dishes served and the singing of songs.]

प्रेमु प्रमोदु बिनोदु बड़ाई । समउ समाजु मनोहरताई ॥ ४ ॥

कहि न सकहिं सत सारद सेसू । बेद बिरंचि महेस गनेसू ॥ ५ ॥

सो मैं कहौं कवन बिधि बरनी । भूमिनागु सिर धरइ कि धरनी ॥ ६ ॥

prēmu pramōdu binōdu barā'ī. sama'u samāju manōharatā'ī. 4.

kahi na sakahīṁ sata sārada sēsū. bēda birañci mahēsa ganēsū. 5.

sō mairṁ kahaum kavana bidhi baranī. bhūmināgu sira dhara'i ki dharanī. 6.

The flow of love and affection, the intensity of happiness and joy, the atmosphere of merriment and informal bonhomie, the praises that were sung (of the king, his sons, their glories, and the general conduct of the entire marriage ceremony), the auspiciousness of the time and the grandeur of the assembly, as well as the general environment of cheerfulness and exhilaration that prevailed at that time [4] was so profound and infectious that hundreds of Saradas (goddess of speech), Seshnaths (the thousand-tongued serpent), the Vedas (scriptures), the Creator known as Biranchi (Brahma), Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and Lord Ganesh (who is an expert in language and grammar) cannot describe them independently and even if they try it together¹ [5]. (4-5)

Well then say, how can I (the author of this book Ram Charit Manas, the great poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas) even imagine doing it in any possible way? How can it be expected that a terrestrial serpent or a tortoise can hold the earth from below on its hood or on its back respectively². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 12 where all these entities have been cited in the same context but with a different use of language when Tulsidas says that how can he ever narrate the divine story of Lord Ram which defies being described even by Sarada, Seshnath, Lord Shiva, Brahma, the Vedas and Purans so much so that they threw up their hands in failure and incompetence to declare that the Lord's story is "Neti-Neti", i.e. 'not this not this'. That is, the story cannot be subjected to any limits of words and their connotations and interpretations. In other words, this timeless story is both "this that has been said", as well as "that which has not been said"! It is infinite and unlimited in its meaning and interpretations.

This is a standard method adopted by Tulsidas to basically say that the thing or situation he wants to describe is so astoundingly wonderful and so immensely great that it is beyond his means to sufficiently describe it in its entirety or find words that would convey the exact meaning of what he wants to say with perfect fineness. He can only give a general idea of what happened at the cited moment or the magnificence and grandeur of the occasion.

²‘Seshnath’ is a celestial serpent who is supposed to hold the earth on its thousand hoods; he is the favourite of Lord Vishnu and helps the Lord recline blissfully on his coiled body as he floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as “Kshir-saagar”. But this does not mean that an ordinary serpent can hold the earth on its hood.

Similarly, Lord Kurma, the “tortoise” incarnation of Lord Vishnu, had held the earth on his back to prevent it from sinking into the nether-world and the void of the cosmos when the gods and the demons had used a huge mountain as a churning-rod to churn the celestial ocean in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss. But that does not mean that any ordinary tortoise would be able to hold the earth on its back.

This shows the humbleness and modesty of Tulsidas because it is not that he was not competent to write an excellent prose or poetry as is proved by the magnificent books that he wrote as masterpieces of Hindi literature that has not seen their parallel ever since his time, but still he did not wish to seem pretentious and boastful.

Remember: more than writing a classic story he was actually journeying on his spiritual pursuit by narrating the divine story of the Lord of his soul, Lord Ram. He was not writing to show-off his talent or skills, but for the peace of his own self and as a token of his service for his beloved and dearest Lord Ram. Tulsidas has made this abundantly clear himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, in extensive verses extending from (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—right upto to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28—right upto Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iii) finally Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 34.]

नृप सब भँति सबहि सनमानी । कहि मृदु बचन बोलाई रानी ॥ ७ ॥
बधू लरिकनीं पर घर आई । राखेहु नयन पलक की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

nrpa saba bhām̐ti sabahi sanamānī. kahi mṛdu bacana bōlā’īm rānī. 7.
badhū larikanīm para ghara ā’īm. rākhēhu nayana palaka kī nā’īm. 8.

In this way, the king duly honoured all those who were invited for the meal. [Refer: Doha no. 354 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above.]

After the guest departed, he called the queens and told them in a sweet voice (politely)—(7)

‘The brides are still young (and inexperienced) girls, and they have come to another (person’s) home. Therefore be careful to take proper care of them just like the eyelids diligently protect the eyes¹. (8)

[Note—¹The eyelids cover the delicate eyes and protect them from all harm at all times. Even when there is no apparent harmful situation, the eyelids constantly flap open and shut to tell the eyes that they are on alert and ever vigilant to extend their shield of protection to the eyes at all times of the day and night. The same metaphor of the eyelids protecting the eyes has been cited in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 59 where mother Kaushalya says that she has been loving Sita and taking care of her like the eyelids do for the eyes, and that she should stay back in Ayodhya instead of going to the forest with Lord Ram so that she (Kaushalya) can survive by showering her love on Sita and embracing her whenever she remembered her son Lord Ram; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142 which says that Lord Ram took extra care of Laxman in the forest just like the eyelids protect the eye.

Presently, the king asks the queen-mothers to be extra vigilant for the happiness and comfort of the four princesses, and to take all necessary steps so that they feel at home.

We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 358 below that the mothers slept with their daughters-in-law clasped in their arms (as if they were infants) just like a serpent sleeps clasping the gem that emerges from its hood.

This verse is remarkable in the sense that it shows how sensitive, practical and wise Dasrath was, for he did not want to leave anything to chance. He realized that the four girls were feeling uneasy in an alien home, and so specifically mentions this to ensure that all-out efforts are made to integrate them in their new homes and they are made comfortable.]

दो०. लरिका श्रमित उनीद बस सयन करावहु जाइ ।
अस कहि गे बिश्रामगृहँ राम चरन चितु लाइ ॥ ३५५ ॥

dōhā.

larikā śramita unīda basa sayana karāvahu jā'i.
asa kahi gē biśrāmagṛham' rāma carana citu lā'i. 355.

The children are tired and sleepy, so put them to bed (i.e. let them go and sleep).'

Saying this, the king went to his own palace's bedroom to retire for the night, enshrining the holy feet of Lord Ram in his sub-conscious mind. [That is, the king had his mind fixed on the holy feet of Lord Ram, and even as he slept his sub-conscious mind remembered the Lord and his divine form as well as his holy lotus-like feet.] (Doha no. 355)

[Note—In his previous life, king Dasrath was Manu, the first male on earth. He had done severe Tapa (penance) to have a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu. When the Lord revealed himself before Manu, the latter told the Lord that he feels fully contented by seeing the Lord's holy feet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 149. In other words, though Manu saw the entire divine form of Lord Vishnu, his mind was focused on the Lord's divine feet. It is this holy feet that every devotee of the Lord wishes to serve. Hence, when Dasrath left to retire for the night, and even as he slept, his attention was fixed on Lord Ram's holy feet because the Lord was none else but Lord Vishnu himself in this form.]

चौ०. भूप बचन सुनि सहज सुहाए । जरित कनक मनि पलँग डसाए ॥ १ ॥
सुभग सुरभि पय फेन समाना । कोमल कलित सुपेतीं नाना ॥ २ ॥
उपबरहन बर बरनि न जाहीं । स्रग सुगंध मनिमंदिर माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
रतनदीप सुठि चारु चंदोवा । कहत न बनइ जान जेहिं जोवा ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'i.

bhūpa bacana suni sahaja suhā'ē. jarita kanaka mani palamṅga ḍasā'ē. 1.
subhaga surabhi paya phēna samānā. kōmala kalita supētīṁ nānā. 2.

upabarahana bara barani na jāhīm. sraga sugandha manimandira māhīm. 3.
ratanadīpa suṭhi cāru camḍōvā. kahata na bana'i jāna jēhīm jōvā. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-4 describe the beds that were prepared for the grooms.]

Hearing the naturally pleasant and sweet words of the king, the mothers arranged beds (on which the four sons would retire for the night). The bedsteads were made of gold and studded with precious gems. (1)

On these bedsteads were spread beautiful soft mattresses which had magnificent covers that were as soft and fluffy-white as the froth of a cow's milk. (2)

On top of them were the pillows so wonderful that they defied description. The 'Mandir'¹ (the decorated bedroom) which was especially prepared for the purpose was adorned with jewels, and was full of fragrance emanating from the garlands made of fresh blooming flowers that were hung all around this room, as well as from the different scents that were either sprayed in the room or kept there (in containers). (3)

There were lamps made out of gems, and the canopy was most marvellous to behold. Taken all-in-all, the sight was so fabulously beautiful that even those who saw it were unable to describe it. (4)

[Note—¹The word "Mandir" (मंदिर) has many connotation, such as a temple, a home, a residence, a room etc., depending upon the context in which it is used. The devotee's heart where he enshrines an image of his revered deity is also called a "Mandir" because it is here that the Lord's image lives in the same way as it is consecrated externally in a temple made of brick and mortar. The room where Lord Ram would sleep was also a "Mandir" because Ram was not an ordinary prince but Lord Vishnu himself in a personified form.

Remember: Mother Kaushalya was well aware of who her 'son' actually was, that he was not an ordinary human but an incarnation of the Viraat Purush, one of the many names of Lord Vishnu—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 201, and Doha no. 202 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

So therefore, when Kaushalya arranged for a room where Lord Ram would retire and take rest, she had the concept of a "temple" in her mind rather than a 'bedroom'.

There is a clever use of this word "Mandir" here by the author Tulsidas because it can be interpreted in the way a reader wishes to read it, and at the same time it covers all the other three bedrooms that were simultaneously prepared for the other brothers also.

It is also possible that there were four beds arranged independently for the four brothers to sleep upon in the same "Mandir" or room. This last interpretation seems most plausible as we shall find out below in verse nos. 5-6 where a reading would give a clear idea that all the brothers had slept on independent beds that were placed in the same room.]

सेज रुचिर रचि रामु उठाए । प्रेम समेत पलंग पौढ़ाए ॥ ५ ॥

अग्या पुनि पुनि भाइन्ह दीन्ही । निज निज सेज सयन तिन्ह कीन्ही ॥ ६ ॥

sēja rucira raci rāmu uṭhā'ē. prēma samēta palamṅga pauṛhā'ē. 5.
agyā puni puni bhā'inha dīnhī. nija nija sēja sayana tinha kīnhī. 6.

The mothers lifted Lord Ram and lovingly escorted him to the bed prepared for him, and made him lie down on it. (5)

Then the Lord repeatedly instructed (in a polite manner; or rather “requested”) his brothers¹ to go and lie down to sleep on their respective beds. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had to “repeatedly” tell his younger brothers to go and sleep because they had kept standing before him as a mark of great respect.

We have read earlier also that Laxman had to be told repeatedly by Lord Ram to go and sleep when the two brothers had retired after serving their guru sage Vishwamitra in Janakpur during the first night of their stay—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 226.

Similarly, sage Vishwamitra had to repeatedly tell Lord Ram and Laxman to go and sleep when the two brothers were massaging the feet of the sage as he lied down to rest for the night—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 226.]

देखि स्याम मृदु मंजुल गाता । कहहिं सप्रेम बचन सब माता ॥ ७ ॥

मारग जात भयावनि भारी । केहि बिधि तात ताड़का मारी ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi syāma mṛdu maṇjula gātā. kahahim saprēma bacana saba mātā. 7.
māraga jāta bhayāvani bhārī. kēhi bidhi tāta tāṛakā mārī. 8.

As the mothers watched Lord Ram with his dark-complexioned body that looked so fine and delicate, they were all amazed and awe-struck by the astounding deeds that the Lord had done¹.

Wondering how the Lord could achieve all this, the mothers lovingly asked him—‘Oh dear son! Say, how did (or could) you kill Tadka², the fierce and colossus demoness, with your delicate frame? (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109 also.

¹The mothers were dazed and amazed as to how Lord Ram could achieve such astounding feats as fighting with and killing of ferocious and blood-thirsty demons. They had thought that Lord Ram was very young, with a delicate and tender body, and being a pampered prince who had never faced hardships or had never been taught to engage in war, it was simply nigh impossible for him to do what he actually did—such as killing the demoness Tadaka and the demon Subahu, as well as the huge blood-thirsty demon army, and that too single-handedly! They wondered in astonishment how the Lord did it; how he managed it?

The question is: how did the mothers come to know about these feats of Lord Ram? Well, we have read a little earlier that king Dasrath had narrated all the developments and events while he sat with his queens to tell them everything from the beginning to end—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 354.

So surely, the king must have told the mothers about these events—the killing of Tadaka and Subahu, the banishment of Marich to the island in the far-away ocean, the elimination of the demon army, the protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, the liberation of Ahilya, and of course, the breaking of the bow and its resultant marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

We will also recall that when the messengers had arrived from Janakpur with the news of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita, they had narrated to king Dasrath all the great deeds done by Lord Ram that had made the Lord famous throughout the world. Though it is not mentioned that these messengers had specifically said anything about the slaying of the demons or liberation of Ahilya or the protection of the sage’s fire sacrifice, but it is a

common-sense assumption that they must have surely done it. This deduction is also based on the fact that Dasrath told them that “ever since Lord Ram had gone from Ayodhya with sage Vishwamitra, it was the first time that a true account of the Lord had arrived”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 291.

The way the messengers had answered the king in Doha no. 291 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3 clearly indicate that they must have told the king of these developments besides narrating how Lord Ram and Sita were married and how the Lord overcame the anger of sage Parashuram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293.

²This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209. It relates to the time when Lord Ram and Laxman were going with sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage in the forest to protect the sage’s fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons.]

दो०. घोर निसाचर बिकट भट समर गनहिं नहिं काहु ।
मारे सहित सहाय किमि खल मारीच सुबाहु ॥ ३५६ ॥

dōhā.

ghōra nisācara bikaṭa bhaṭa samara ganahim nahim kāhu.
mārē sahita sahāya kimi khala mārīca subāhu. 356.

The demons were ferocious and cruel to the extreme; they were formidable warriors who counted no one as worthy of obstruction in their path. Say, how could you (Lord Ram) kill such fierce and wicked demons as Marich and Subahu along with their companions? (Doha no. 356)

[Note—This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 210. It relates to the time when Lord Ram had protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 2 also.]

चौ०. मुनि प्रसाद बलि तात तुझारी । ईस अनेक करवरें टारी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

muni prasāda bali tāta tumhārī. īsa anēka karavarēm ṭārī. 1.

Oh my dear son! I offer all my good deeds as a sacrifice for your sake and your well-being. Indeed it was due to the blessing of the sage (Vishwamitra) and the grace of the Lord God (or Lord Shiva—“īsa”) that all the adversities and obstacles were swept aside for your benefit. (1)

[Note—There were so many unforeseen and unpredictable difficulties that may have arisen and caused so many problems for Lord Ram that were avoided because of the

blessing of the powerful sage Vishwamitra who possessed great mystical powers, as well as by the grace of Lord God. The word used in the text is “Eesh” (ईश) which has two basic meanings—one is the God worshipped by a person as his favourite deity, and the other is Lord Shiva. Both these meanings fit in well here.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 240. It was the time when sage Satanand, the royal priest of Janak, had come to sage Vishwamitra to invite him, along with the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman, to come with him to attend the bow-breaking ceremony which will decide who marries Sita. Sage Vishwamitra told the brothers that they should come along and see whom the “Eesh” chooses to be the lucky one who will break the bow and marry Sita. Then Laxman had replied that the Eesh would favour that person upon whom he, i.e. sage Vishwamitra, is favourable and gracious. And as it happened, this ‘chosen one’ favoured by the Eesh (Lord Shiva) was Lord Ram because the sage had already blessed the Lord that his wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 237.

Presently, the mothers are reiterating the same sentiment—saying in effect that since sage Vishwamitra was kind and gracious upon Lord Ram and had blessed him, the Lord God also favoured the Lord by removing all hurdles from his path and help him attain glory and fame.]

मख रखवारी करि दुहुँ भाई । गुरु प्रसाद सब बिद्या पाई ॥ २ ॥

makha rakhavārī kari duhum̐ bhā'īm. guru prasāda saba bidyā pā'īm. 2.

Well, the two brothers had protected the fire sacrifice of the sage¹, and had obtained “Vidya” (esoteric knowledge and rare skills)² due to the blessing of the guru (sage Vishwamitra)³. (2)

[Note—¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

²This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

³A person from whom one learns anything, any skill or knowledge of any kind whatsoever, is a “guru” for that person. The word means a ‘teacher’. Since sage Vishwamitra had taught the two brothers the esoteric knowledge pertaining to secret use of powerful mystical weapons and how to conquer thirst and hunger, he was a ‘guru’ of Lord Ram and Laxman. It is to be noted that since the time this knowledge was imparted by the sage to the two brothers, he was constantly addressed as a “guru”. There are umpteen numbers of instances for this: for example, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 6 that precede Doha no. 237; (iii) Doha no. 239; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 267; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 307.

It is interesting to note here that in the entire story of Ramayan, Lord Ram has addressed only two sages as his “guru”—one was of course sage Vasistha, the royal priest and preceptor of the ruling family of Ayodhya, and the other was sage Vishwamitra. Both had taught Lord Ram—sage Vasistha was the first guru because the four brothers were sent to his hermitage to study when they were old enough for education—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204. Sage Vishwamitra was the second guru as narrated above.]

मुनितिय तरी लगत पग धूरी । कीरति रही भुवन भरि पूरी ॥ ३ ॥

munitiya tarī lagata paga dhūrī. kīrati rahī bhuvana bhari pūrī. 3.

The wife of the sage (i.e. Ahilya) was liberated from her curse as soon as the dust of your (Lord Ram's) feet touched her¹.

Indeed, your fame and glories have filled all the directions of the world². (3)
[Note—¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12, and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 262 that proclaim the Lord's glory at the time the Lord had broken the formidable bow; and (ii) from Doha no. 291—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293 that narrate the praises heaped upon Lord Ram by the messengers of king Janak while they were describing the achievements of the Lord to king Dasrath.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 3.]

कमठ पीठि पबि कूट कठोरा । नृप समाज महुँ सिव धनु तोरा ॥ ४ ॥
बिस्व बिजय जसु जानकि पाई । आए भवन ब्याहि सब भाई ॥ ५ ॥

kamaṭha pīṭhi pabi kūṭa kaṭhōrā. nrpa samāja mahum̐ siva dhanu tōrā. 4.
bisva bijaya jasu jānaki pā'ī. ā'ē bhavana byāhi saba bhā'ī. 5.

In the middle of a society of great warriors¹, you (Lord Ram) had easily broken the bow of Lord Shiva which was sturdier and stronger than the hardest entities in this world², such as the shell of the tortoise, the Vajra (the strong weapon of Indra, the king of gods, which is said to be made of the hardest material in existence), and the mightiest of mountains. (4)

This achievement gave you the honour of attaining world-wide fame and glory as well as the hand of Sita in marriage. It is so fortunate for all of us and glorifying for the whole family that all the four brothers have got married simultaneously and returned home with their respective brides³. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; and from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252.

³Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 3 also.]

सकल अमानुष करम तुहारे । केवल कौसिक कृपाँ सुधारे ॥ ६ ॥

sakala amānuṣa karama tumhārē. kēvala kausika kṛpām̐ sudhārē. 6.

Indeed, all your deeds are essentially super-human by nature, and not possible to be replicated by anyone else. It is only that sage Vishwamitra's grace have made these

astounding and super-human deeds of yours appear to be more human by nature because the world thinks that they were made possible by the grace and blessing of the sage. [In other words, the sage's blessings and grace have camouflaged the reality of the super-human nature of your mystical deeds.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹This observation has wider ramifications. It means that though Lord Ram's worldly life seemed to be like that of any other human being—he was born like an ordinary human child, studied and played like a child, grew up to become a warrior prince who would fight and kill enemies represented by the demons, who would marry and get sucked in family intrigue which made him go to the forest and suffer its travails, have his wife stolen and then woefully lament her loss, but determined to retrieve her he waged a fierce war at Lanka and finally won it, returned home to ascend the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and ruled for thousand of years like a noble king, produced two sons, named Lav and Kush, and finally exited from the earth grieving for his beloved wife Sita whom he had to abandon due to aspersions cast on her character by someone of his subject—he nevertheless was above all this gross form of worldly drama, and did everything he did to hide his real identity from the demons. This was to ensure that the demons did not run away from him upon realising Lord Vishnu has finally come down to earth to eliminate them, but on the other hand take the Lord as an ordinary human prince and battle with him so that the Lord gets an opportunity to finish them off.

Hence, the camouflage that the Lord adopted was to hide his real intentions and the secret job on earth, which was to eliminate the demons. This conceit helped him to succeed in his mission.

His form was like any other human being, but his deeds were beyond the abilities of a human. This had created doubts even in the mind of the demon king Ravana too as is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-6. Here we shall read that Ravana was stunned and dumbfounded when he came to know of the marvellous deeds and the unparalleled valour of Lord Ram that led to the killing of so many of the greatest demons of his race. He wondered how it was ever possible for any human to do this. In any case, Ravana thought that if Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being who had come to earth as prophesised by the scriptures, then this was a golden chance for him to find salvation and emancipation, and if he was an ordinary prince then Ravana would kidnap and enslave the Lord's wife Sita as this was the wont and the natural habit of the demon race to take away other people's women by force.

A little later we read in this context that Marich had tried to convince Ravana about the divinity of Lord Ram by arguing that all the stupendous deeds that the Lord had done—such as the killing of the demons Subahu and Tadaka—was impossible for any human to do. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 25.]

आजु सुफल जग जनमु हमारा । देखि तात बिधुबदन तुझारा ॥ ७ ॥

āju suphala jaga janamu hamārā. dēkhi tāta bidhubadana tumhārā. 7.

Oh dear son. Today we regard our lives as being fruitful and rewarded as we watch your divine form with our own eyes¹. [That is, how lucky are we that we are able to see so closely the Supreme Lord of creation with our own eyes. Not only this, we are also able to shower our personal care and love upon him. Say, who else has this good fortune?] (7)

[Note—¹The same sentiment was expressed by the crow saint Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Doha no. 75 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Earlier in the story we read that when Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, had decided to take refuge with Lord Ram, the same emotions were expressed by him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 42 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.]

जे दिन गए तुझहि बिनु देखें । ते बिरंचि जनि पारहिं लेखें ॥ ८ ॥

jē dina ga'ē tumhahi binu dēkhēm. tē biran̄ci jani pārahim̄ lēkhēm. 8.

Let the Creator (biran̄ci) not count those days of ours which had gone by without seeing you. [That is, let us be able to see you every day of our lives; let not even one day pass when we are not able to see your divine form.] (8)

[Note—Lord Ram was very dear to all living beings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56.

This loving assertion of the mothers, including of course Kaikeyi, that “let not a single day pass without them not seeing Lord Ram’s divine form”, would come to a naught in a few days’ time when Kaikeyi’s stubbornness would force Lord Ram to go to the forest for 14 years of exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (ii) Doha no. 33.

This is the way the Lord’s “Maya”, his delusion-creating powers, holds the world in its sway. This is the very reason why the Lord had smiled wryly in line no. 2 of Doha no. 350 Kha of this present chapter known as Baal Kand. He smirked because he knew that all this expression of love and affection by the mothers and his father would vanish in a few days’ time when he would be asked to go to the forest with his wife and his younger brother Laxman.]

दो०. राम प्रतोषीं मातु सब कहि बिनीत बर बैन ।

सुमिरि संभु गुर बिप्र पद किए नीदबस नैन ॥ ३५७ ॥

dōhā.

rāma pratōṣīm mātu saba kahi binīta bara baina.

sumiri sambhu gura bipra pada ki'ē nīdabasa naina. 357.

Lord Ram most politely gratified his mothers and said ‘thank you’ to them. Then he fixed his attention on Lord Shiva, his guru and Brahmins in general as he gradually fell asleep. (Doha no. 357)

[Note—The mothers were babbling excitedly and preventing the Lord from falling asleep by their constant chatter. The Lord was feeling distracted, so after a while he politely told them ‘thank you and good night’. Then in order to calm his senses and fall asleep he concentrated his attention on Lord Shiva etc. so that his mind becomes calm.]

चौ०. नीदउँ बदन सोह सुठि लोना । मनहुँ साँझ सरसीरुह सोना ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

nīda'um̐ badana sōha suṭhi lōnā. manahum̐ sām̐jha sarasīruha sōnā. 1.

The countenance and form of Lord Ram looked magnificent even while he slept just like the case of the red-tinged lotus flower that retains its beauty even during the twilight hours. (1)

[Note—The lotus flower usually shrivels up, losing its beauty and sheen when the sun sets in the evening. This applies to the lotus with a blue colour. But, the lotus flower with red petals retains its beauty even during the twilight hours, perhaps because of an abundance of infra-red rays in the light of the setting sun. The light of the setting sun enhances the beauty of the red-coloured lotus rather than subduing it.

During the twilight hours, the infra-red colour of the setting sun's light adds to the natural red colour of the petals of the lotus flower to produce a cumulative effect of enhanced glow and charm of the lotus. On the other hand, this infra-red colour neutralizes the colour of the lotus flower with blue petals, making them look luster-less and shrunk.

Tulsidas has used this metaphor from Nature to emphasise that the glow and charm of Lord Ram's face was the same when the Lord slept as when he was awake. This special mention was necessary because when a person sleeps he is unable to smile or show any sort of other emotions. So, if Lord Ram looked attractive to others just because he always sported a pleasing smile on his face, or made friendly eye-contact with everyone around, or even slightly nodded to acknowledge their presence and politely exchanged greetings with them, no such gesture was possible when the Lord slept. But it did not mean that the prettiness of his face, the charm of his countenance and the divinity of him was diminished even a bit.]

घर घर करहिं जागरन नारीं । देहिं परसपर मंगल गारीं ॥ २ ॥

ghara ghara karahim̐ jāgarana nārīm̐. dēhim̐ parasapara maṅgala gārīm̐. 2.

In every household of the city, the women-folk kept awake or vigil throughout the night, merrily singing songs with lyrics that were laced with teasing words. (2)

[Note—At the time of the marriage ceremony at Janakpur, similar songs laced with taunts were sung by the women-folk of the city to add a lot of fun and jest to the occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 329.

It is a custom that the women keep awake during the first night of the arrival of the groom with his bride in their home. There is a lot of excitement, singing, celebration and rejoicing so much so that no one finds time to go to sleep. This practice also has its origin in the ancient belief that keeping awake during the first night helps to ward-off any evil spirit which may want to sneak in and harm the newly arrived couple.

It ought to be noted also that the celebrations in the royal household were shared by each and every citizen of the capital—whether it was singing, playing of musical instruments, decorating the homes, etc. Abundant instances of this are available in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instance—(i) Doha no. 194; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that

precede Doha no. 263; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 287; (iv) Doha no. 296 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 2; (v) Doha no. 344 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 4; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 351.]

पुरी बिराजति राजति रजनी । रानीं कहहिं बिलोकहु सजनी ॥ ३ ॥

purī birājati rājati rajanī. rānīm kahahim bilōkahu sajanī. 3.

In fact, the night looked so alive and vibrant with celebrations and rejoicings that it left the queens spell-bound. They exclaimed—‘Look friend, how wonderful the night appears to be! Not only our homes, but even the entire city appear to be decked up like a bride.’

(3)

[Note—At the time of birth of Lord Ram, the same situation prevailed in Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.

It was repeated once again when the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in the city—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297.]

सुंदर बधुन्ह सासु लै सोई । फनिकन्ह जनु सिरमनि उर गोई ॥ ४ ॥

sundara badhunha sāsū lai sō’īm. phanikanha janū siramani ura gō’īm. 4.

The mothers-in-law clasped their beautiful daughters-in-laws to their bosoms when they went to bed to sleep just like the serpent, from whose hood a sac of luminescent sap issues, coils around it when it goes to sleep. (4)

[Note—A special category of serpents produce a sap-like substance from the top of its hood. This sap is viscous like thick jelly, effuses a glow, and is contained in a membranous sac. It is called a “Mani”, a gem. According to mythology, this type of serpent remains inside its hole in the daytime, and emerges only during the darkness of the night in search of its prey. But it can see only in the light emanating from this ‘Mani’ which the serpent always carries on its hood wherever it goes. If someone removes this Mani by deceit, the serpent is believed to go blind, and severely curses the stealer.

This allegory is cited here to stress that the three mothers-in-law began to love their daughters-in-law with the same intensity of attachment and care that this category of serpent has for its Mani.

We have read earlier that king Dasrath had instructed the queens to take extra care of the four brides because they have come to an alien home, to a new culture, and may be feeling very uneasy, homesick, hesitant and shy. The queen mothers were obliged and expected to make them feel comfortable, relaxed, and at home—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 355.

Besides the orders of the king, the mothers themselves had taken likeness for the four brides and had become fond of them since the first moment they saw them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 349; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 349.

So, when the time came to go to bed, the queen mothers took the brides with them so that the young princesses did not feel lonely and homesick. It was a gesture to make the

brides feel that they will get the same love and affection from their mothers-in-law as their own mothers had given them at Janakpur.]

प्रात पुनीत काल प्रभु जागे । अरुनचूड़ बर बोलन लागे ॥ ५ ॥
बंदि मागधन्हि गुनगन गाए । पुरजन द्वार जोहारन आए ॥ ६ ॥

prāta punīta kāla prabhu jāgē. arunacūṛa bara bōlana lāgē. 5.
bandi māgadhanhi gunagana gā'ē. purajana dvāra jōhārana ā'ē. 6.

The Lord (Sri Ram) woke up at dawn at an auspicious time when the cock began to crow¹. (5)

The royal bards and minstrels began singing laudatory verses even as the citizens collected at the gates of the palace calling out for Lord Ram to come to meet them². (6)

[Note—¹The same time of Lord Ram's waking up has been mentioned at Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 226.

²It was a standard practice during those days that bards and minstrels gathered at the gates of the palace to sing the glories of the royal family at dawn. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194 where it is mentioned that bards, minstrels and other singers sang the glories of the great royal family of king Raghu in laudatory verses.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37 where it is stated that the bards and minstrels had gathered at the gates of king Dasrath's palace at dawn, but were surprised to see that the king hadn't woken up by then though it was his practice—Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 37 along with its following verse nos. 1-2.]

बंदि बिप्र सुर गुर पितु माता । पाइ असीस मुदित सब भ्राता ॥ ७ ॥

bandi bipra sura gura pitu mātā. pā'i asīsa mudita saba bhrātā. 7.

The four brothers offered their respects to the Brahmins, the gods, the guru, and their parents. Having received their blessings, the brothers felt exhilarated. (7)

[Note—Lord Ram and his brothers were very diligent in obeying the noble traditions established by the scriptures and the society, and one of these traditions was to pay one's respects to the elders the first thing in the morning. Then the Lord carried out his duties as per instructions of his parents and guru. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

जननिह सादर बदन निहारे । भूपति संग द्वार पगु धारे ॥ ८ ॥

jananinha sādara badana nihārē. bhūpati saṅga dvāra pagu dhārē. 8.

The queens reverentially gazed at his (Lord Ram's) countenance¹. Then he accompanied the king (his father, Dasrath) to the gate of the palace. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is the hero of this epic story, is the eldest of the four brothers, and is the central figure in the narrative. Hence, all eyes are fixed on him, and he is the reference point for all discussions. He is the pivot upon which the entire story revolves and the acts of the epic drama unfold.

The mothers have thanked their good fortune earlier also when they had said that their life has been rewarded when they could see the divine form of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 357 herein above.

The word “reverentially or respectfully” (“*sādara*”) implies that the queen-mothers held Lord Ram in high esteem, and treated him with the same honour that they had for their family deity. There is no surprise in this because mother Kaushalya had witnessed the Lord’s mystical powers and his true form as the Viraat Purush when he was still a child—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 202.]

दो०. कीन्हि सौच सब सहज सुचि सरित पुनीत नहाइ ।
प्रातक्रिया करि तात पहिं आए चारिउ भाइ ॥ ३५८ ॥

dōhā.

kīnhi sauca saba sahaja suci sarita punīta nahā'i.
prātakriyā kari tāta pahim ā'ē cāri'u bhā'i. 358.

The four brothers performed all the purification acts and did their ablutions by bathing¹ in the holy river Saryu though they were inherently clean and pure.

Having done with their daily routine of cleaning themselves, they came to their beloved father (king Dasrath)². (Doha no. 358)

[Note-¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227 where we read that Lord Ram and Laxman have cleaned themselves the first thing in the morning before they went to serve their guru, sage Vishwamitra, in the first morning after their arrival at Janakpur.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.

²The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205 that say Lord Ram first cleaned himself and then went to his father to take instructions from him to carry on with his assigned duties.]

चौ०. भूप बिलोकि लिए उर लाई । बैठे हरषि रजायसु पाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

bhūpa bilōki li'ē ura lā'ī. baiṭhē haraṣi rajāyasu pā'ī. 1.

When the king saw the brothers, he embraced them affectionately¹. The brothers sat down cheerfully when they got instructions from their father to do so². (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 308 that describe the exhilaration of king Dasrath when he met Lord Ram and Laxman at Janakpur.

²An extra-ordinary level of decorum and dignified behaviour were practiced in those times. The princes did not just come in and sat down near their father; they remained standing till the king ordered them to take their seats. Being obedient to the father and doing as told by him is the best form of fulfilling the edicts of Dharma (righteous behaviour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35; and Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 205.

When Lord Ram and Laxman had returned from their visit to the city of Janakpur, they had bowed before their guru, sage Vishwamitra, and then sat down only when ordered by the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 225.

Even after Lord Ram ascended the throne of Ayodhya, this decorum was maintained inasmuch as the three brothers always watched the face of Lord Ram and waited for any instructions that the Lord may issue to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 25.]

देखि रामु सब सभा जुड़ानी । लोचन लाभ अवधि अनुमानी ॥ २ ॥

dēkhi rāmu saba sabhā juṛānī. lōcana lābha avadhi anumānī. 2.

When the members of the assembly (royal court) saw Lord Ram, all of them felt extremely blessed as if they have got the full reward of possessing their eyesight. (2)

[Note—The same idea is expressed when the marriage party had seen Lord Ram when it arrived at Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 309.

Seeing the Lord was extremely satisfying even for the great sages, such as Sarbhanga—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

पुनि बसिष्टु मुनि कौसिकु आए । सुभग आसनन्हि मुनि बैठाए ॥ ३ ॥
सुतन्ह समेत पूजि पद लागे । निरखि रामु दोउ गुर अनुरागे ॥ ४ ॥

puni basiṣṭu muni kausiku ā'ē. subhaga āsanānhi muni baiṭhā'ē. 3.
sutanha samēta pūji pada lāgē. nirakhi rāmu dō'u gura anurāgē. 4.

Then sages Vasistha and Kushik (Vishwamitra) arrived in the court, and the king respectfully gave them beautiful thrones to sit upon. (3)

The king paid his obeisance to the two gurus by duly worshipping their feet along with his four sons¹. The two gurus meanwhile were enchanted when they saw Lord Ram (and a surge of affection for the Lord flowed through their inner-being)². (4)

[Note—¹Worshipping the feet of the guru was a standard practice—refer, for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 352 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 which are explicit on this point.

Earlier we read that the king had done the same thing on different occasions when he met the two great sages. For instance, with respect to sage Vishwamitra, we have two outstanding examples, one is when the sage had gone to Ayodhya to request for Lord Ram being sent to his hermitage to eliminate the demons (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 207), and the second instance is when the king met this great sage when he came to Janakpur with the marriage party (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 307 and its following Chaupai line no. 1).

As for sage Vasistha, we have the following instances: one is when the king had gone to him to request him to advise a way by which he can have sons as his heirs (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 189), and the other instance is when the king approached him to find out the auspicious time to anoint Lord Ram on the throne of Ayodhya (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3).

²Lord Ram had enchanted everyone who saw the Lord, and the two gurus were no exception. For example, (a) refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207 when sage Vishwamitra saw Lord Ram and his brothers for the first time, and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10 when sage Vasistha meets Lord Ram in connection with the latter coronation, and once again when the sage met the Lord in Chitrakoot as narrated in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 243.]

कहहिं बसिष्टु धरम इतिहासा । सुनहिं महीसु सहित रनिवासा ॥ ५ ॥

kahahim basiṣṭu dharama itihāsā. sunahim mahīsu sahita ranivāsā. 5.

Sage Vasistha narrated many an episodes from the scriptures such as the Itihas (ancient mythological history pertaining to the gods). The king attentively listened to them along with the members of his family. (5)

[Note—Again, this was a standard practice that when sages sat anywhere, they would narrate stories from the scriptures bearing a moral and spiritual message—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26 where the same thing has been said about sage Vasistha, but here the Vedas and the Purans have been mentioned instead of the Itihas.

We have read earlier that sage Vishwamitra had done the same thing—that is, he had narrated the stories from the Itihas and Purans—when he sat down to relax with the junior sages accompanying him to Janakpur during the first evening of his stay there: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 226.

Not only the sages, even Lord Ram had narrated extracts from the scriptures to entertain Laxman and Sita in the forest when they felt forlorn and sad, in order to keep their mind engaged and diverted from the travails of forest life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141.]

मुनि मन अगम गाधिसुत करनी । मुदित बसिष्टु बिपुल बिधि बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

muni mana agama gādhisuta karanī. mudita basiṣṭa bipula bidhi baranī. 6.

The marvelous deeds and achievements of sage Vishwamitra (son of Gaadhi) that were of an astounding nature and even incomprehensible for other sages, were narrated with great aplomb by sage Vasistha. (6)

[Note—The story of sage Vishwamitra has been narrated as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206 at the beginning of this episode of Lord Ram's marriage.

Sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra had been arch enemies in some ancient time, but they had made up patched up later on. This praise of Vishwamitra by Vasistha was to cement their ties and bury whatever vestiges of ill-will that may have survived. It was also done to indicate to king Dasrath why Vasistha had prevailed upon him to let Lord Ram and Laxman go with sage Vishwamitra as no harm could ever come to the two brothers when they were under the protection of this great and mystically empowered sage.]

बोले बामदेउ सब साँची । कीरति कलित लोक तिहुँ माची ॥ ७ ॥

bōlē bāmadē'u saba sām̐cī. kīrati kalita lōka tihum̐ mācī. 7.

Whatever sage Vasistha said about Vishwamitra was endorsed by sage Vamdeo who said, 'Everything is true. Indeed, the glories of sage Vishwamitra are well established in all the three levels or areas of the world.' [These three levels are—the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.] (7)

सुनि आनंदु भयउ सब काहू । राम लखन उर अधिक उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

suni ānandu bhaya'u saba kāhū. rāma lakhana ura adhika uchāhū. 8.

Hearing these words and listening to the magnificent glories of sage Vishwamitra, everyone present there felt delighted, but Lord Ram and Laxman were more delighted than others. (8)

[Note—The reason for the two brothers feeling “more delighted than others” is that by this time they had developed a strong bond of affection and endearment with the great sage. They had experienced the depth and intensity of Vishwamitra's love and affection for them, and had by then begun to see the sage fulfilling two roles simultaneously—one of their father king Dasrath, and the other of their guru Vasistha. For instance, (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208 tells us that sage Vishwamitra assumed the role of their father; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 209 which tell us how the sage taught the two brothers certain esoteric skills, thereby becoming their guru; (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 226 tell us how affectionately the two brothers had served the sage by insisting upon massaging his legs even when the sage kept on telling them to go and sleep during their first night at Janakpur; (iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 237, and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 240 where we read that the sage had blessed the brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled; and finally (v) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254 where we read that sage

Vishwamitra had spoken very lovingly when he had ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow.

In other words, to be brief, Lord Ram and Laxman had begun to love sage Vishwamitra more than anyone else. They had become informal with him, had developed a special affection and affinity for him because the sage had shared with them some of the happiest moments of their lives—the time when they got married. The loving sage had played a stellar role in bringing this about.

Lord Ram and Laxman had been more informal and friendly with sage Vishwamitra than they had been with either their father king Dasrath or their guru sage Vasistha.]

दो०. मंगल मोद उछाह नित जाहिं दिवस एहि भाँति ।
उमगी अवध अनंद भरि अधिक अधिक अधिकाति ॥ ३५९ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgala mōda uchāha nita jāhiṁ divasa ēhi bhām̐ti.
umagī avadha ananda bhari adhika adhika adhikāti. 359.

Days passed away merrily with constant rejoicing and celebrations. It appeared that happiness and joy were sweeping across Ayodhya in wave after wave, each swelling higher and still higher than the previous one. (Doha no. 359)

[Note—Similar celebrations were witnessed in Ayodhya at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345.]

चौ०. सुदिन सोधि कल कंकन छोरे । मंगल मोद बिनोद न थोरे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sudina sōdhi kala kaṅkana chōrē. maṅgala mōda binōda na thōrē. 1.

Deciding upon an auspicious day, the sacred strings (that were tied around the wrist and waist of the grooms and the brides as part of the marriage ritual to ward-off evil spirits and bad omens if any) were untied (removed) from the bodies (of the grooms and their respective brides) amid a lot of celebrations and fanfare. (1)

नित नव सुखु सुर देखि सिहाहीं । अवध जन्म जाचहिं बिधि पाहीं ॥ २ ॥

nita nava sukhu sura dēkhi sihāhīm. avadha janma jācahīm bidhi pāhīm. 2.

Observing that there were constant celebrations in Ayodhya and the atmosphere was rich in happiness and joy; the gods praised the city and prayed to the creator Brahma that they should be allowed to take birth in Ayodhya. (2)

[Note—The gods have praised the city of Ayodhya elsewhere also. For example, refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196; as well as (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 26. All these verses are explicit on this point that the gods were enchanted by the fabulous beauty and charm of Ayodhya.]

बिस्वामित्रु चलन नित चहहीं । राम सप्रेम बिनय बस रहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
दिन दिन सयगुन भूपति भाऊ । देखि सराह महामुनिराऊ ॥ ४ ॥

bisvāmitru calana nita cahahīm. rāma saprēma binaya basa rahahīm. 3.
dina dina sayaguna bhūpati bhā'ū. dēkhi sarāha mahāmunirā'ū. 4.

Sage Vishwamitra wanted to leave for his hermitage and expressed his intention daily, but he had to keep deferring it in deference to the requests of Lord Ram who wanted the sage to stay for some more time. (3)

The great sage who was like a king among sages (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) appreciated the ever-increasing respect for him that was expressed by the king (Dasrath)¹.

[So, despite his strong desire to leave for his hermitage as it was already very long since he left it with Lord Ram and Laxman when they went to Janakpur, he had to keep postponing his departure because of Lord Ram's insistence and the respect that king Dasrath showed to him.] (4)

[Note—¹We have read that when Dasrath had wanted to leave Janakpur for his own city of Ayodhya after the marriage ceremony was finished, Janak had similarly prevailed upon Dasrath to stay for some more time. Janak's warmth of affection and hospitality was also so great that Dasrath could not muster enough courage to leave against Janak's wishes to avoid being impolite and making the latter feel insulted and offended. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 332.]

मागत बिदा राउ अनुरागे । सुतन्ह समेत ठाढ़ भे आगे ॥ ५ ॥
नाथ सकल संपदा तुह्कारी । मैं सेवकु समेत सुत नारी ॥ ६ ॥
करब सदा लरिकन्ह पर छोहू । दरसनु देत रहब मुनि मोहू ॥ ७ ॥

māgata bidā rā'u anurāgē. sutanha samēta ṭhārha bhē āgē. 5.
nātha sakala sampadā tumhārī. maim sēvaku samēta suta nārī. 6.
karaba sadā larikanha para chōhū. darasanu dēta rahaba muni mōhū. 7.

Finally, when many days had passed, one day the sage politely requested the king to let him leave. Hearing this, the king was overwhelmed with affections and stood reverentially before the sage accompanied by his sons. (5)

The king said affectionately and reverentially, ‘Oh Lord! All my wealth and realm are yours. I too am your servant together with my sons and wives (i.e. my queens and daughters-in-law)¹. (6)

Be always kind, compassionate and loving upon your children (me and my family). Oh Lord, please be kind to let me have your Darshan (holy sight) time and again in the future also. [That is, kindly visit my kingdom often, and whenever you please. You are most welcome, and I will feel glad to worship you again and again in the future.]² (7)

[Note—¹A similar situation prevailed at the time of departure of the marriage party from Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 340—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.

²Later on in the story we shall read that Lord Ram had also requested his friends, the monkeys led by Sugriv, the friendly demons led by Vibhishan, and the boatman named Nishad, at the time of their going back to their respective homes from Ayodhya where they had all come with Lord Ram when he returned from Lanka after the end of his 14 years of forest exile, that they should always remember the Lord affectionately, and keep coming back to Ayodhya whenever they wish—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 15—to Doha no. 16; and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 20.]

अस कहि राउ सहित सुत रानी । परेउ चरन मुख आव न बानी ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi rā'u sahita suta rānī. parē'u carana mukha āva na bānī. 8.

Saying this, the king fell at the feet of the sage together with his queens and his sons. He was so overwhelmed with emotions that words failed him and he could not say anything else. (8)

दीन्हि असीस बिप्र बहु भाँती । चले न प्रीति रीति कहि जाती ॥ ९ ॥

dīnhi asīsa bipra bahu bhāmṭī. calē na prīti rīti kahi jāṭī. 9.

The Brahmin (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) in his turn blessed all of them profusely. Then the sage departed from there for his hermitage, but on the way he was himself overcome with emotions of love and affection for the whole royal family. This mutual affection and respect for each other were so profound and sincere that one cannot describe them. (9)

[Note—A similar situation prevailed when Lord Ram had to send his friends, the monkeys, the bears, the demons and the boatman, back to their homes from Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Similarly, Janak and his queen Sunayana were also overwhelmed with surging emotions when the marriage party finally left Janakpur for Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 336—to Doha no. 337; and (ii) Doha no. 338 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.]

रामु सप्रेम संग सब भाई । आयसु पाइ फिरे पहुँचाई ॥ १० ॥

rāmu saprēma saṅga saba bhā'ī. āyasu pā'i phirē pahumcā'ī. 10.

Lord Ram, accompanied by his brothers, affectionately escorted the sage (to the outskirts of the city) and returned back only after he ordered them to do so. (10)

[Note—There are two other instances where we read that the host has escorted the guest when the latter was going away to his place.

One is when king Janak had gone a long distance with Dasrath to see him off when the marriage party was returning to Ayodhya. After paying his obeisance to all the Brahmins, sages and elders of the marriage party, as well as showing his respects to king Dasrath and love for all the four brothers, king Janak had finally returned home. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 340—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.

The other instance is when the friends of Lord Ram—the monkeys led by Sugriv, the bears led by Jamvant, the demons led by Vibhishan, and the head of the boatman community named Nishad who had come to Ayodhya aboard the air-plane in which Lord Ram had returned to Ayodhya after his 14 year forest exile—were requested by the Lord to go back to their respective homes. The Lord and his brothers had gone out to escort them from Ayodhya—refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.

This entire episode however is narrated in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.]

दो०. राम रूपु भूपति भगति व्याहु उछाहु अनंदु ।
जात सराहत मनहिं मन मुदित गाधिकुलचंदु ॥ ३६० ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpu bhūpati bhagati byāhu uchāhu anandu.
jāta sarāhata manahim mana mudita gādhikulacandu. 360.

As the sage, who was like a moon in the family of king Gaadhi¹ (i.e. sage Vishwamitra), went on his way to his hermitage (which was located far away in the forest), he kept on praising in his Mana (mind and heart), all along the way, the beauty and the charm of the countenance and form of Lord Ram², the devotion and piety of king Dasrath, and the festivities, the joys and rejoicings of the events of the marriage ceremony. (Doha no. 360)

[Note—¹The metaphor of the moon is used to say that sage Vishwamitra was a prominent member of the family of Gaadhi, and that his glories shone brilliantly like that of the full moon in the night sky.

²When Lord Ram had sent-off his monkey, bear and demon friends back to their respective homes from Ayodhya, they had also remembered the Lord and his glories all along their way back—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 17 Ka.]

चौ०. वामदेव रघुकुल गुर ग्यानी । बहुरि गाधिसुत कथा बखानी ॥ १ ॥
सुनि मुनि सुजसु मनहिं मन राऊ । बरनत आपन पुन्य प्रभाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

bāmadēva raghukula gura gyānī. bahuri gādhisuta kathā bakhānī. 1.
suni muni sujasu manahim mana rā'ū. baranata āpana pun'ya prabhā'ū. 2.

Sage Vamdeo and the wise¹ preceptor of the family of king Raghu, i.e. sage Vasistha, once again² narrated the glorious story of the son of the family of king Gaadhi, i.e. sage Vishwamitra. (1)

Hearing the famed glories of the sage (Vishwamitra), the king praised to himself his own good fortune and meritorious deeds (that had enabled him and his sons Lord Ram and Laxman to serve the great sage, and be lucky to have received his patronage and blessings)³. (2)

[Note—¹The use of the word “gyani” (ग्यानी), which means one who is wise and knowledgeable, implies here that whatever had been said about Vishwamitra by the wise sage (Vasistha) was genuine and truthful, and nothing by way of flattery.

Another important point is that this word “gyani” has been so strategically put that it applies equally to Vasistha as well as Vamdeo. In other words, it implies that both these sages who had narrated the glories of Vishwamitra, i.e. Vasistha and Vamdeo, were equally wise, learned and knowledgeable.

²This is the second time that sage Vishwamitra's immense achievements and mystical powers have been described by sage Vasistha. The first occasion was when the sages had assembled in the court of king Dasrath as narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 359. At that time when sage Vasistha had lauded the stupendous glories of sage Vishwamitra, sage Vamdeo had endorsed them, saying that whatever Vasistha had said about Vishwamitra was indeed the truth.

On this second occasion, however, both the sages, i.e. Vasistha and Vamdeo, have together spoken highly of Vishwamitra. To speak highly of someone and praise him behind his back is the sincerest form of praise.

³The king felt extremely happy that he had been able to serve such a great sage even without having to make any special effort to do so. Normally one had to make a lot of effort to first find who a great and realized sage is, and then it takes a lot more effort to be able to serve such a sage so that he gets sufficiently pleased. In the case of Dasrath the tables were turned in as much as the sage himself had come to the king to seek his favour—which was to lend his two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, to the sage so that the latter's fire sacrifice could be saved. In return, the sage rewarded king Dasrath by getting all his sons married to noble princesses belonging to the royal family of king Janak who was equal in stature to king Dasrath.]

बहुरे लोग रजायसु भयऊ । सुतन्ह समेत नृपति गृहँ गयऊ ॥ ३ ॥

bahurē lōga rajāyasu bhaya'ū. sutanha samēta nrpati grham' gaya'ū. 3.

All the rest of the people who had assembled to see-off sage Vishwamitra were given instructions to go their way. Then the king, accompanied by his sons, went to his palace. (3)

[Note—The king was always accompanied by his sons. There are many instances of this mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instance, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 309; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 315; (iii) line no. 1

of Doha no. 354; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 358; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 359; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 360.

In other words, king Dasrath was so fond of Lord Ram and his brothers that he tried to keep them with him as much as possible and practical. This is clear when he had declined to oblige sage Vishwamitra when the sage asked for Lord Ram to be sent with him to the forest for protecting his fire sacrifice. The king had told the sage that all the four sons were equally dear to him, and in fact were dearer to him than his own life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 208.

This was in line with what Dasrath had himself sought as a boon from Lord Vishnu in his previous life as Manu when he had done severe Tapa (penance) to have a divine vision of the Lord. Manu had asked Lord Vishnu to bless him so that “his life depended upon the love of the Lord just like the life of a serpent depends upon the Mani (gem) on its hood”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 151.]

जहँ तहँ राम ब्याहु सबु गावा । सुजसु पुनीत लोक तिहुँ छावा ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ taham̐ rāma byāhu sabu gāvā. sujasu punīta lōka tihum̐ chāvā. 4.

Everyone (i.e. the citizens of the city of Ayodhya and the subjects of the extended kingdom, the gods in heaven, the people of the world at large, in all its corners) fondly sang (i.e. narrated and discussed) about the marriage ceremony (of Lord Ram and his brothers) so much so that its magnificent events and cheerful moments had spread in all the three spheres of the world (the heaven, the earth and the subterranean or nether world). (4)

[Note—The messengers of king Janak had also endorsed this fact that the glory of Lord Ram has been established in all the three worlds when they were describing the events leading upto the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow by Lord Ram and the subsequent marriage of the Lord with Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 291.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265 which also reiterates that the news of Lord Ram marrying Sita after breaking the bow of Lord Shiva had spread to all the corners of the world—i.e. in the heaven where the gods live, on the earth where the mortal creatures live, and in the subterranean world where the serpents live.]

आए ब्याहि रामु घर जब तें । बसइ अनंद अवध सब तब तें ॥ ५ ॥

ā'ē byāhi rāmu ghara jaba tēm̐. basa'i ananda avadha saba taba tēm̐. 5.

Ever since the time Lord Ram had arrived home after his marriage, all sorts of happiness and joys took up residence in Ayodhya. (5)

[Note—Though Ayodhya was always an abode of happiness, joy and prosperity, on special occasions it looked more wonderful with all the extra decorations and festivities. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 296.

This time around the glory of Ayodhya was enhanced because now Sita, who was actually goddess Laxmi personified, has come to live here. Laxmi is the goddess of all-

round prosperity and well-being, so all sorts of happiness and joy, the sense of contentedness and fulfillment that are associated with this goddess being pleased upon a person, came and blessed Ayodhya so much so that the city appeared to be an abode of prosperity, happiness and well-being.

The intensity of happiness and joy that prevailed in Ayodhya was compounded with the arrival of Sita, though of course all aspects of well-being and cheerfulness were always associated with the city by virtue of it being the home of Lord Ram who himself was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Refer specially to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; and (b) Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 30.]

प्रभु बिबाहँ जस भयउ उछाहू । सकहिं न बरनि गिरा अहिनाहू ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu bibāham̐ jasa bhaya'u uchāhū. sakahim̐ na barani girā ahināhū. 6.

Even the goddess of speech (“Gira”; goddess Saraswati or Sarada) and the lord of serpents (i.e. Lord Seshnath with a thousand tongues) were not able to describe the immensity and intensity of celebrations and festivities that attended the marriage ceremony of the Lord (i.e. Sri Ram, and by inference all the brothers—because all of them were married simulateneously under the same capnoy that was erected for the wedding rituals, and married to the princesses of the same family, the royal family of king Janak).

[That is, it was beyond the abilities of Saraswati and Seshnath to describe the celebrations and festivities associated with the marriage of Lord Ram and his brothers.]

(6)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 331 which say the same thing.]

कबिकुल जीवनु पावन जानी । राम सीय जसु मंगल खानी ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि ते मैं कछु कहा बखानी । करन पुनीत हेतु निज बानी ॥ ८ ॥

kabikula jīvanu pāvana jānī. rāma sīya jasu maṅgala khānī. 7.
tēhi tē maim̐ kachu kahā bakhānī. karana punīta hētu nija bānī. 8.

[Now, Tulsidas talks about his own good luck that he has had the rare opportunity to sing the divine glories of Lord Ram and Sita by way of narrating their divine marriage, when even Saraswati and Seshnath were unable to do so. In other words, Tulsidas says that he has tried his best to narrate the story of Lord Ram’s wedding with Sita, but his narration is not enough or sufficient because even divine Beings such as goddess Saraswati and Lord Seshnath had failed to do so.]

I regard my life as a poet worthwhile and rewarded because I have been able to narrate, as much and as best as I could, the divine glories and famed deeds of Lord Ram and Sita. (7)

I have attempted to narrate a bit of it just to purify my words and speech. [That is, though I am absolutely incompetent to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita, I still took the plunge because I wished to purify and wash clean my own faculty of speech and polish my words. I did not narrate this story to boast of my writing prowess or poetic skills, but to take a dip, as it were, in this holy pond of nectar in order to purify my mind and its faculty of thought and speech.] (8)

[Note—An exactly similar emotion has been expressed by Tulsidas in the beginning of the narration, by way of a preamble, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Doha no. 10 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-4; (iii) Doha no. 12 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-12; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 355.]

छं०. निज गिरा पावनि करन कारन राम जसु तुलसीं कह्यो । १ ।
 रघुबीर चरित अपार बारिधि पारु कबि कौनें लह्यो ॥ २ ॥
 उपबीत ब्याह उछाह मंगल सुनि जे सादर गावहीं । ३ ।
 बैदेहि राम प्रसाद ते जन सर्वदा सुखु पावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija girā pāvani karana kārana rāma jasu tulasīm kahyāō. 1.
 raghubīra carita apāra bāridhi pāru kabi kaunēm lahyāō. 2.
 upabīta byāha uchāha maṅgala suni jē sādara gāvahīm. 3.
 baidēhi rāma prasāda tē jana sarbadā sukhu pāvahīm. 4.

Tulsidas says that he has narrated the magnificent tale of Lord Ram's hallowed life and divine deeds just to purify and sanctify his own tongue and its faculty of speech. (1)

Otherwise, since Lord Rajubhir's (i.e. Lord Ram's) story is like a limitless ocean, which poet (in his right senses) would even ever think of attempting to narrate it?¹ (2)

Indeed, those who reverentially hear and devotionally sing the auspicious events and celebrations associated with Lord Ram's sacred-thread ceremony (i.e. his childhood days) and his marriage ceremony (i.e. his adulthood days)² on a daily basis (i.e. regularly; whenever they wish to purify their mind and heart, as well as to free themselves from worldly taints and tensions), [3]----

-----such persons are always blessed with great happiness and well-being by the grace of Lord Ram and Vaidehi (Sita) [4]. (3-4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says in effect—'In spite of knowing the impossibility of ever accomplishing the formidable task of fully and correctly depicting the glorious life and time of Lord Ram successfully by narrating his divine story, I (Tulsidas) still went ahead with this formidable task just to purify my inner self, my mind and heart, my faculty of speech and my whole being.

Despite being fully aware that it is not possible to ever describe the life and times of Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the Supreme Being himself, in its entirety, and even if one tries then to do justice with this narration, and though I was fully aware of my own inadequacies, my limitations and incompetencies, I nevertheless still chose to go ahead with this narration, singing and glorifying the Lord, narrating various events of his

hallowed life and the divine deeds done by him just because I wanted to sanctify my own words by using them in honour of Lord Ram.

I simply wished to worship my Lord God, Sri Ram, by sacrificing all the skills I had to serve him. And since by vocation I am a poet and writer, the best form of service I could think of was to spend my time and life singing the divine glories of the Lord to the best of my abilities, and in the best way my mind and heart guided me to do. It is my humble way of serving my Lord God and put myself in his service.

I wished to cleanse all the impurities that had been clinging to my inner-self, my heart and my mind, by devoting them exclusively in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and writing of the Lord was a natural outcome of this emotion; narrating the story of Lord Ram is my way of venting my emotion of devotion and love for Lord Ram, and it is completely free from pretensions or boast.

I just wanted to sacrifice my self, both the grosser aspect of the body consisting of such organs as that of speech, sight, touch and hearing, as well as its subtler aspect consisting of the mind and heart, in the service of Lord Ram whom I hold dear to my inner-being.

Let it be clear from my side that I do not want anyone to think that I am showing-off my prowess as an expert writer and word-smith. I am neither of them. I have already made these points very clear repeatedly in the very beginning of my narration of Ram Charit Manas. Refer, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 355.’

²The “childhood days of Lord Ram” have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from the Chanda that precedes Doha no. 192—to Doha no. 205.

The “adulthood days of Lord Ram” have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from the Chaupai line no. 1 precedes Doha no. 206—to the end of Baal Kand in Doha/Sortha no. 361 herein below.]

सो०. सिय रघुबीर बिबाहु जे सप्रेम गावहिं सुनहिं ।
तिन्ह कहूँ सदा उछाहु मंगलायतन राम जसु ॥ ३६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

siya raghubīra bibāhu jē saprēma gāvahim sunahim.
tinha kahum sadā uchāhu maṅgalāyatana rāma jasu. 361.

Those who listen carefully, with great devotion and affection, the story narrating the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, they will always enjoy all round auspiciousness and well-being by the grace and blessing of the Lord. Such is the glory of Lord Ram!! (Sortha/Doha no. 361)

इति श्रीमद्रामचरितमानसे सकलकलिकलुषविध्वंसने
प्रथमः सोपानः समाप्तः
(बालकाण्ड समाप्त)

iti śrīmadrāmacaritamānasē sakalakalikaṣavidhvansanē prathamah sōpānah
samāptah.

Thus ends Baal Kand (Canto no. 1) of this divine nectar-like auspicious story of
Lord Ram that is known as “Ram Charit Manas”.

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The Epic Story of Lord Ram's Marriage with Sita

{ Narrated entirely in English from Goswami Tulsidas' revered devotional classic "Ram Charit Manas", and his other 3 books, viz. "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nachu" & "Geetawali", as well as sage Veda Vyas' rendering of the story in "Adhyatma Ramayan". }

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration & English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

Part 2:

This 2nd Part of the book titled "The epic story of the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita" has 4 Sections. Each section has the full original text of the relevant book it quotes, followed with an English rendering of the same.

Section 1—"Janki Mangal": This section presents Goswami Tulsidas' full book titled "Janki Mangal" which is entirely dedicated to the theme of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita. The full book is quoted in this section. It is a tradition in Indian households, especially in the regions of Northern India that were formally under the kingdom of Ayodhya, to sing the verses of Janaki Mangal during marriage festivities in a family as they are said to bring auspiciousness and well-being on the bride as well as the groom, and their respective families.

Section 2—"Ram Lala Nahchu": This section presents in English the entire text of Tulsidas' book "Ram Lala Nachu". It is a small text dedicated to a ritual known as 'Nahachu' that is undertaken prior to the actual wedding ceremony. It's a fascinating collection of melodious verses that are sung during wedding rituals in India.

Section 3—"Geetawali": This section presents in English the entire relevant part of the text of Tulsidas' great narration of the story of the Ramayan in his book titled "Geetawali". This is a wonderful book that narrates the entire story of Lord Ram's life and times in melodious verses composed with the aim that they can be sung to the tune of different Ragas, or different musical tunes and notes of classical Indian music.

Section 4—"Adhyatma Ramayan": This is a wonderful narration of the epic story of Lord Ram with an emphasis on its metaphysical aspect. It was penned by the renowned scholar sage Veda Vyas who is credited with the classification of the text of the Vedas into four parts, the separation of the 108 Upanishads from the text of the Vedas and presenting them independently, as well as the authorship of the 18 major Purans and the Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran.

The story pertaining to Lord Ram's marriage with Sita is narrated in this book in its Baal Kand, Canto 4—to Canto 7. The full text in Sanskrit is quoted alongside its English rendering.

PART—2/Section-1

Goswami Tulsidas'

“JANKI MANGAL”

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration and
English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

Invocational prayer

गुरु गनपति गिरिजापति गौरि गिरापति ।
सारद सेष सुकबि श्रुति संत सरल मति ॥1॥
हाथ जोरि करि बिनय सबहि सिर नावौ ।
सिय रघुबीर बिबाहु जथामति गावौ ॥2॥

guru ganapati girijāpati gauri girāpati.
sārada sēṣa sukabī śruti santa sarala mati. 1.
hātha jōri kari binaya sabahi sira nāvaum̐.
siya raghubīra bibāhu jathāmati gāvaum̐. 2.

1-2. I (Tulsidas) bow my head most reverentially to my Guru (moral preceptor), Lord Ganesh, Lord Shiva, Gauri (Parvati, the divine Goddess and the consort of Shiva), the Lord of the spoken word (represented by Lord Brahma, the creator of the Vedas, the ancient scriptures that were the first spoken texts), goddess Sharda (Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge and speech), Seshnath (the legendary serpent who supports the world), the great poets and bards (Sukabi), the Srutis (Vedas), and simple-hearted and pious saints.

I join the palms of my hands as a mark of great respect to all of you, and I also pray to all of you in order to invoke your combined blessing as I am about to sing (narrate in poetic verses) about the auspicious marriage ceremony of Lord Sri Ram and Sita, and the festivities associated with it, according to my intelligence and understanding. [So, please be gracious, and help me in my pious efforts.] (1-2)

[Note—It is a tradition that when one starts on any enterprise he first invokes the Gods and Goddesses to bless him and pave the way for his success. It is also to show respect to

the divine powers of the Supreme Lord in its many manifestations, and to invoke these powers so that a person's noble venture is completed without problems and bears the desired fruits.]

Preparation for the Swayambar (marriage ceremony)

सुभ दिन रच्यौ स्वयंवर मंगलदायक ।
 सुनत श्रवन हिय बसहिं सीयरघुनायक ॥३॥
 देस सुहावन पावन बेद बखानिय ।
 भूमि तिलक सम तिरहुति त्रिभुवन जानिय ॥४॥

subha dina racyau svayambara maṅgaladāyaka.
 sunata śravana hiya basahiṁ sīyaraghunāyaka. 3.
 dēsa suhāvana pāvana bēda bakhāniya.
 bhūmi tilaka sama tirahuti tribhuvana jāniya. 4.

3-4. On an auspicious day, royal arrangements were made for the marriage ceremony, known as a Swayambar, of Sita. Tulsidas says that by merely hearing about this auspicious occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the divine couple resides in the heart of the hearer.

This ceremony was organized in a country called 'Tirhut' which was exceptionally pleasant, beautiful and charming. This venue was best place on the earth. In fact, it was regarded as a crown-jewel amongst all the places in the entire creation consisting of three subsections known as the 'Tribhuvan'. It was so magnificent that it also found fame in the Vedas (which extolled its beauty and worthiness for top honours). (3-4)

[Note :- A *Swayambar* was an occasion when the marriage of a girl was formalized. There were a number of ways this was done—viz. (a) As the name suggests, the girl could select and choose the groom of her choice, and (b) The father of the girl used to set a pre-condition, and any gentleman who fulfilled it became eligible to marry her. In the case of Sita, the latter system was followed, and the condition which was stipulated was the breaking of the heavy and sturdy bow of Lord Shiva that was known as 'Pinak'.

Tirhut was another name of the kingdom of Janakpur whose king was Janak, the father of Sita. The word 'Tirhut' has its genesis in the presence of three great ancient sages who were experts in performing fire sacrifices on a regular basis. These three were Yagyawalkya, Gautam and Vishwamitra. In common usage this place was more popularly known as the kingdom of Janakpur. In the present-day India, this covers the areas of Darbhanga and Muzzafarpur in the eastern state of Bihar. In ancient times, the capital city of this area was known as Janakpur, and today it falls in Nepal. See verse no. 5 below.

The area was very pleasant and free from wild plants and thorns. It was always vibrant with greenery and well provided for in terms of financial well-being and prosperity.

The word *Tribhuvan* refers to the three legendary worlds—the heavens, the earth and the subterranean world.]

तहँ बस नगर जनकपुर परम उजागर ।
 सीय लच्छि जहँ प्रगटी सब सुख सागर ॥५॥

जनक नाम तेहि नगर बसै नरनायक ।
सब गुन अवधि न दूसर पटतर लायक ॥ 6 ॥

taham̐ basa nagara janakapura parama ujāgara.
sīya lacchi jaham̐ pragaṭī saba sukha sāgara. 5.
janaka nāma tēhiṁ nagara basai naranāyaka.
saba guna avadhi na dūsara paṭatara lāyaka. 6.

5-6. There, in the country called Tirhut, was a famous city called Janakpur (which was its capital). In this city, goddess Laxmi (the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme God) manifested herself in the person of Sita who was like an ocean of all things auspicious, cheerful, blissful, delightful and joyous. (5)

There lived a king there by the name of Janak. He possessed all the good virtues one can imagine of, and there was no one comparable or akin to him anywhere in the world. [That is, Janak was an extremely wise, enlightened and acclaimed king. He possessed peerless noble virtues and grand qualities the like of which no one possessed at that time anywhere on earth. The other name of king Janak was ‘Shir-dwaj’. There was no king who was like him in the past, no one at that current time, and no one would be in the future. See verse no. 7.] (6).

[Note—Regarding the birth of king Janak and naming of the kingdom and the capital after him, there is a legend that sage Vashistha had once cursed king Nimi and the latter had died. The other sages and seers of the place found that there was no one to head the kingdom, and therefore to avoid a power vacuum they churned Nimi’s dead body to produce a son who was named ‘Mithi’, as he was a product of ‘churning’. {‘Mathana’ in Hindi means ‘churning’. Mithi is derived from Mathana. ‘Mithi’ means the result of churning something.}]

Mithi established a kingdom named after him as ‘Mithila-puri’. Since that time, the kings of this dynasty assumed the general name of ‘Mithilesh’—the lord of the kingdom of Mithila-puri, or those kings who belonged to the line of king Mithi.

These kings of this dynasty were also called ‘Janak’ which was assumed to be their general title or surname. This word refers to the fact that the first king of this dynasty was born directly from the body part of his father, the ‘Janak’. {Janak = father.} Another reason is that the kings of this dynasty were so nice and graceful that all of them looked after their kingdom and its subjects as if they were his dearest possessions and beloved off-springs. Since these kings were like a ‘father’ for all the people of the kingdom, they were honoured by the title of ‘Janak’, meaning ‘father’.

The third name assigned to the kings of this lineage was ‘Videha’, meaning ‘one without a body’. This epithet has two connotations—one is that all the kings were highly enlightened and self-realised so much so that they were aware of the metaphysical and spiritual fact that the physical gross body was not their true identity, as their true ‘self’ was the Atma, the soul which lived inside this body as pure consciousness. They did their duties in a dispassionate and detached manner, remained absorbed in meditation and contemplation, and never indulged in gratification of the sense organs of the body. For all practical purposes therefore, the physical gross body mattered not at all for these enlightened kings, hence the name ‘Videha’—one without a body, or one without the awareness of the existence of the physical body.

Another reason of their being called ‘Videha’ is that their fore-father, king Nimi, was not born in the normal biological process of a union between a male and a female, but as

a result of churning of the body of a dead king. In other words, his birth was from a non-living entity, and therefore was deemed as a mystical product created by the sages and seers by merely observing some formality of churning of the dead body of king Nimi, for where has anyone ever seen the birth of a living being from a dead body!

The story of Sita's birth is equally interesting. Janak had no heirs. He was advised by sages to perform a fire-sacrifice. While the ground was being prepared for the altar of the sacred fire, the head of the plough got stuck into a pot buried in the ground. When it was taken out, it was discovered that it contained an infant girl. In the beginning the king thought that this was a bad omen, but his royal priest and other sages who had assembled there advised him that this girl would give him immense fame and a chance to meet the Supreme Lord. Since this lovely girl was discovered when the ploughshare got stuck in the ground, she was named 'Sita'—meaning precisely this, the 'tip or edge of the ploughshare'.

Again, since Sita was born from the Mother Earth, she was also regarded as the daughter of Prithivi (earth). Earth is regarded as the foot of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-encompassing vast form of the Supreme Being. This is why Laxmi, whose incarnation was Sita, is invariably depicted to be seated near the feet of Lord Vishnu, another name of the Viraat Purush. It was this Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram of Ayodhya to whom Sita was married. This is natural to expect because Laxmi is the eternal divine consort of Vishnu.

The lineage of the kings of the Janakpur dynasty is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Canto 71. The story related to how Sita was born is narrated in Adbhut Ramayan (purported to have been written also by Valmiki), Canto 8, verse nos. 36-44. This latter book's full English version has been published by this author separately.]

भयउ न होइहि है न जनक सम नरवइ ।
सीय सुता भइ जासु सकल मंगलमइ ।। ७ ।।
नृप लखि कुँअरि सयानि बोलि गुर परिजन ।
करि मत रच्यौ स्वयंवर सिव धनु धरि पन ।। ८ ।।

bhaya'u na hō'ihī hai na janaka sama narava'i.
sīya sutā bha'i jāsu sakala maṅgalama'i. 7.
nrpa lakhi kumāri sayāni bōli gura parijana.
kari mata racyau svayambara siva dhanu dhari pana. 8.

7-8. There has not been a king like Janak in the past, there is none at present, and there shall be none in the times to come. His daughter was Sita who was a personified form of all auspiciousness, and a herald of all good fortunes. (7)

Seeing that the princess has come of age, the king summoned his Guru (named Shataa-nand) and other family members and discussed with them about the prospects of her marriage. They unanimously decided to hold a 'Swayambar' with Lord Shiva's bow as the pivot on which the decision of who will marry Sita would rest. [That is, Shiva's formidable bow was made the condition of marriage of Sita, and it was decided that anybody who strings the bow shall marry the princess¹.] (8)

[Note--¹This decision is narrated in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 1-3 which reiterates the same vow of Janak.]

पनु धरेउ सिव धनु रचि स्वयंबर अति रुचिर रचना बनी ।
 जनु प्रगटि चतुरानन देखाई चतुरता सब अपनी ।।
 पुनि देस देस सँदेस पठयउ भूप सुनि सुख पावहीं ।
 सब साजि साजि समाज राजा जनक नगरहि आवहीं ।।1 ।।

chanda:

panu dharē'u siva dhanu raci svayambara ati rucira racanā banī.
 janu pragaṭi caturānana dēkhā'ī caturatā saba apanī.
 puni dēsa dēsa sam'dēsa paṭhaya'u bhūpa suni sukha pāvahīm.
 saba sāji sāji samāja rājā janaka nagarahīm āvahīm. 1.

Chanda 1. The king (Janak) organized the Swayambar with the stringing of Lord Shiva's bow as the central theme (or the pre-condition set for the marriage of Sita). That bow was extremely magnificent to behold, and it appeared as if the creator Brahma had used it as a showpiece-sample to exhibit all the expertise in master craftsmanship that he possessed.

Then message (invitation) was sent to all the countries to invite their rulers to attend the ceremony to be held at Janakpur.

Hearing this news, all the countless great kings and princes of the world felt glad, and they arrived at Janakpur with all their royal regalia, pomp and pageantry, resplendent with the best of regal paraphernalia that each of them possessed. (Chanda 1)

रूप सील बय बंस बिरुद बल दल भले ।
 मनहुँ पुरंदर निकर उतरि अवनिहिं चले ।।9 ।।
 दानव देव निसाचर किंनर अहिगन ।
 सुनि धरि-धरि नृप बेष चले प्रमुदित मन ।।10 ।।

rūpa sīla baya bansa biruda bala dala bhalē.
 manahum' purandara nikara utari avanihim calē. 9.
 dānava dēva nisācara kinnara ahigana.
 suni dhari-dhari nrpa bēṣa calē pramudita mana. 10.

9-10. All of the kings groomed (i.e. prepared) themselves well before departure from their respective kingdoms. They were handsome, virtuous, of the proper age, of a high pedigree and of a noble clan, and were strong and accomplished. When they arrived in Janakpur with full pomp and pageantry, they were all in their finest of royal regalia and were accompanied by their royal armies. It looked then that whole court of Indra (the king of Gods) has come down (descended) on earth (to attend and witness the marriage ceremony of Sita, who was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi). (9)

Even the Danavas (demons), the Gods, the Nisaachars (phantoms and ghosts who walk in the night; the ogres and the hobgoblins), the Kinnars (celestial singers and dancers), and Ahigans (the legendary serpents representing the inhabitants of the subterranean world)—all of them assumed a human form of a king on hearing of the

Swayambar, and cheerfully proceeded to Janakpur to attend and witness the magnificent event. (10)

[Note—Refer also Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 252 where king Janak has himself acknowledged this fact that all the great kings of many continents have arrived to attend and try their luck in the Swayambar of Sita. Even the Gods and Demons had arrived there in the form of human beings.]

एक चलहिं एक बीच एक पुर पैठहिं ।
 एक धरहिं धनु धाय नाइ सिरु बैठहिं ।।11।।
 रंग भूमि पुर कौतुक एक निहारहिं ।
 ललकि सुभाहि नयन मन फेरि न पावहिं ।।12।।

ēka calahim ēka bīca ēka pura paiṭhahim.

ēka dharahim dhanu dhāya nā'i siru baiṭhahim. 11.

raṅga bhūmi pura kautuka ēka nihārahim.

lalaki subhāhim nayana mana phēri na pāvahim. 12.

11-12. Some of them (the kings and princes) are ready for departure¹ (for Janakpur). Some are on their way, some have already arrived and are entering the city, while still others rush at the sight of the bow to snatch it up (before others could try their hands at it because they want to grab the first opportunity), and being unable to lift it up, they sit down on their seats most dejected, crestfallen and full of shame². (11)

Some of them go around the city cheerfully for sightseeing, and glance at the decorations of the city as well as that of the 'Rang Bhumi'—i.e. the arena of the bow-breaking ceremony. They appear virtuous by their demeanours³, and are so enthralled by the charming sights of the city that they could not wean away or divert their mind and eyes from its splendour, grandeur, magnificence and charm⁴. (12)

[Note—¹It is a regular practice with Tulsidas that he employs the present tense in his narratives. His idea is that he is virtually seeing the events unfolding before his mental eyes, and is witnessing them first hand as they happen. He is a scribe who simply narrates what he witnesses happening, neither adding nor subtracting anything on his part. It must be noted that Tulsidas was not an ordinary poet exhibiting his poetic skills; his writings were inspired by the Lord himself, and therefore the Lord had indeed given him the divine spiritual vision to see what had actually happened long long ago.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251.

³Not all the kings had come to compete in the bow-breaking ceremony. Some of them were very noble and virtuous, and they maintained their dignity by not even attempting to go near the dais where the big bow was kept. On the other hand, they even tried to pacify other kings who were trying to create a ruckus after their failure at lifting the bow.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 225 where Lord Ram and his brother Laxman go round the city of Janakpur and are enthralled by its beauty and charm, and in turn they captivate the citizens by their own beauty and charm.

(ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 289.

(iii) Doha no. 289 and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

जनकहि एक सिहाहिं देखि सनमानत ।
 बाहर भीतर भीर न बनै बखानत ।।13 ।।
 गान निसान कोलाहल कौतुक जहँ तहँ ।
 सीय—बिबाह उछाह जाइ कहि का पहँ ।।14 ।।

janakahi ēka sihāhiṁ dēkhi sanamānata.
 bāhara bhītara bhīra na banai bakhānata. 13.
 gāna nisāna kōlāhala kautuka jaham̐ taham̐.
 sīya-bibāha uchāha jā'i kahi kā paham̐. 14.

13-14. Some of the assembled kings feel jealous of those kings who they observe are being welcomed by king Janak, and at the same time they envy the majesty, wealth and grandeur of Janak¹ as well as the finesse with which he deals with all of them. They resent the way the newly arrived kings and princes are being shown respect by Janak according to their status (because some of these egoistic and haughty kings think that no other king is greater than them in this world).

[There were some proud kings who were full of vanity and haughtiness. They would not tolerate that some other king should be shown respect in their presence. This made them look and feel inferior to others in front of their attendants, something that they were not willing to digest.

Besides this, they were also jealous of the wealth of their host, king Janak, because they watched him liberally spending wealth, without hesitation or limit, in the welcoming ceremony of countless monarchs. They were already in awe at Janak's material prosperity and the wealth of the kingdom, and this awe turned into an exacerbated sense of jealousy and envy when they saw that other kings were given liberal gifts which could have been theirs in the first place if these kings had not come. They grumbled, 'why did Janak not give this or that gift to me, and why did he think I did not deserve some precious gift that he gave to that other king?' And so on and so forth

There was another reason for their exacerbated sense of jealousy and envy. They felt that the more people assembled to compete to break the bow, the chances of their getting an opportunity to try their strength and luck would be correspondingly less because of the crowd and its accompanying melee, and the corresponding necessity to stand in a queue. They loathed this idea—because, after all, one king at a time could be allowed to try his luck, and the first one to successfully lift and string the bow would get to marry Sita, the trophy of the competition, while others behind the successful candidate would be left in the lurch. This would be too grave an insult for those who could not even try. All these factors created a lot of resentment and grumbling amongst the assembled kings and princes.]

Presently, there is such a huge jostling, surging crowd (of kings and princes and their attendants, as well as the excited citizens of Janakpur), both inside and outside of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, in the city, in the palace grounds, and even outside the city, that it is impossible for anyone to describe the occasion. Everywhere there is an atmosphere of festivity, celebration and joy. There is a loud cacophony of songs and beating of drums to add to the festivities².

Well say (wonders Tulsidas), who can ever describe the all-permeating sense of joy and exhilaration that marked the festive atmosphere that prevailed at Janakpur on the auspicious occasion of Sita's marriage? (13-14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 289 and its previous Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

(ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 314

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263;

(ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265;

(iii) Doha no. 285—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286.

(iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.

(v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.

(vi) Doha no. 324.]

Sage Vishwamitra asks Dasrath to lend him Lord Ram

गाधि सुवन तेहि अवसर अवध सिधायउ ।
नृपति कीन्ह सनमान भवन लै आयउ ॥15॥
पूजि पहुनई कीन्ह पाइ प्रिय पाहुन ।
कहेउ भूप मोहि सरिस सुकृत किए काहु न ॥16॥

gādhī suvana tēhi avasara avadha sidhāya'u.
nrpati kīnha sanamāna bhavana lai āya'u. 15.
pūji pahuna'ī kīnha pā'i priya pāhuna.
kahē'u bhūpa mōhi sarisa sukrta ki'ē kāhu na. 16.

15-16. About that time, sage Vishwamitra went to Ayodhya. The king (Dasrath) showed great respect to him, and brought him home to his palace. (15)

The king was extremely pleased to have such an exalted sage as his honoured guest, and so he made all efforts to duly welcome the sage, making him feel most comfortable and at home. The king expressed his immense pleasure by saying—‘Oh sage, I am very privileged and honoured to welcome you and have you as my honoured guest. It appears that no one has done so many good and virtuous deeds as me¹ because I it is me who has been given the honour of having an exalted sage like you as my guest.’ (16)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated by Tulsidas in detail in his epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Doha and Sortha no. 208.

It is also described extensively in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 47-56.

Briefly the story goes that sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was continuously defiled by the demons who threw muck and poured blood on the sacred fire. Frustrated, the sage meditated and had a divine vision of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, having taken birth for the precise reason of eliminating the cruel demons. So the sage decided to go and bring the Lord to initiate this process. He went to Ayodhya, the capital of the kingdom of Avadh, and requested king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, to send Ram and his younger brother Laxman with him so that the tyranny of the demons could be effectively dealt with. The king was initially reluctant because he forgot, in his

worldly love for the Lord, that he was not an ordinary human being but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and that the main purpose of the Lord descending on this earth was to rid it from the torment of ferocious demons. His royal priest, sage Vashistha, however saw the dilemma that the king was in, and so he took him into confidence and told him that he need not fear for the safety of the two brothers, and that they were very safe in the hands of the great sage who had immense mystical powers to afford them full protection. Vashistha assured Dasrath that Ram and Laxman were safer in the company of sage Vishwamitra than they would be with their own father. Besides this, the time had come when the Lord must step out of his protected cocoon and prove his mantle, abilities, strength and prowess to the world. And there was no better and safer opportunity to do this than in the overall protection of the great sage Vishwamitra. So Dasrath agreed and sent the two brothers with the sage.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310 that says “the auspicious deeds of Dasrath have made Lord Ram (the Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu) assume a body (of a human being)”.]

काहूँ न कीन्हेउ सुकृत सुनि मुनि मुदित नृपहि बखानहीं ।
महिपाल मुनि को मिलन सुख महिपाल मुनि मन जानहीं ।।
अनुराग भाग सोहाग सील सरूप बहु भूषन भरीं ।
हिय हरषि सुतन्ह समेत रानीं आइ रिषि पायन्ह परीं ।।2।।

chanda:

kāhūṁ'na kīnhē'u sukr̥ta suni muni mudita nṛpahi bakhānahīm.
mahipāla muni kō milana sukha mahipāla muni mana jānahīm.
anurāga bhāga sōhāga sīla sarūpa bahu bhūṣana bharīm.
hiya haraṣi sutanha samēta rānīm ā'i riṣi pāyanha parīm. 2.

Chanda 2. The king observed cheerfully, ‘No one has done good and virtuous deeds as I have done, and no one is as fortunate as I am—because today, a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra has come on his own to my place to pay a visit, and make me blessed and fortunate in every way.’

Hearing these pleasurable words of the king, the sage reciprocated by honouring and blessing the king (that he is the most fortunate person in the whole world because he has the rare privilege of having the Lord of the world as his son, Lord Ram)¹. The joy and pleasure of meeting each other were known only to the king’s and the sage’s hearts; no one else could fathom it.

The queens—who were well endowed with luck, good fortunes, virtues and beauty, and were bedecked with numerous ornaments befitting great queens—came with their sons (Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan), and affectionately fell at the feet of the sage (as a mark of respect, and to seek his blessings). (Chanda 2)

[Note—¹This is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas as well. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294 where sage Vashistha has praised king Dasrath in the same way, saying—“There is no one who has done auspicious deeds like you have in this world—neither was there anyone in the past, nor is there anyone in the present, or anyone would be in the future. Say, who can be said to have done more virtuous deeds that are

greater than the ones you have done, oh king, for you have Lord Ram as your son (a feat that is not possible unless one has done exceptionally high quality deeds, and is equally, exceptionally, fortunate and lucky)".]

कौसिक दीन्हि असीस सकल प्रमुदित भई ।
सींचीं मनहुँ सुधा रस कलप लता नई ॥17॥
रामहि भाइन्ह सहित जबहिं मुनि जोहेउ ।
नैन नीर तन पुलक रूप मन मोहेउ ॥18॥

kausika dīnhi asīsa sakala pramudita bha'ī.
sīñcīm manahum' sudhā rasa kalapa latā na'īm. 17.
rāmahi bhā'inha sahita jabahim muni jōhē'u.
naina nīra tana pulaka rūpa mana mōhē'u. 18.

17-18. Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) blessed them. They (the queens) felt extremely delighted as if the sage had watered tender creepers of the Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the Gods) with the water of Amrit (the elixir of life and the ambrosia that gives eternal peace, bliss and happiness). (17)

When the sage saw Lord Sri Ram along with his brothers, tears (of profound love and surging affection) welled up in his eyes; his body was extremely thrilled, and his heart and mind (the 'Mana') were enamoured and held in thrall by their beauty. (18)

[Note—(i) There is an interesting episode mentioned in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 17, stanza no. 5 that would explain why the mothers were excited and happy when they came to meet sage Vishwamitra and made their sons (Lord Ram and others) bow before the sage to seek his blessings. They had a recollection of an earlier episode during the first few days after the birth of the four brothers when a fortune-teller had come and had examined the palms of the children to forecast their future. At that time he had said that one day sage Vishwamitra would come and he would take Ram away with him on the pretext of having his fire sacrifice protected by Lord Ram, but the real reason would be to get him married to Sita. He had also predicted about the future happiness, the immense fame and the stupendous glory of the four children.

So when the great sage Vishwamitra actually came for a visit, it was natural for the mothers to become very excited and happy.

(ii) Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207.

The difference between these two versions of the sage meeting Lord Ram and his brothers and becoming overwhelmed with love and affection for the Lord, i.e. the present one as narrated in our current book 'Janki Mangal' and 'Ram Charit Manas', is that in Janki Mangal it is the mothers who bring the sons to bow before the sage, while in Ram Charit Manas it is king Dasrath who does it.]

परसि कमल कर सीस हरषि हियँ लावहिं ।
प्रेम पयोधि मगन मुनि पार न पावहिं ॥19॥
मधुर मनोहर मूरति सादर चाहहिं ।
बार बार दसरथके सुकृत सराहहिं ॥20॥

parasi kamala kara sīsa haraṣi hiyaṁ lāvahiṁ.
 prēma payōdhi magana muni pāra na pāvahiṁ. 19.
 madhura manōhara mūrati sādara cāhahiṁ.
 bāra bāra dasarathakē sukr̥ta sarāhahiṁ. 20.

19-20. He (Vishwamitra) touched the head of Lord Sri Ram with his lotus-like hands, and overwhelmed with exhilaration and joy he embraced the Lord, clasping him to his heart. The sage got so ecstatic that he virtually immersed himself in an ocean of love and affection for the Lord. [This symbolic ocean was so deep, dense and heaving that the sage got virtually drowned in its surging waves; he was unable to fathom it. The burst of exhilaration and ecstasy was so profound and intense that he could not stand against its blast and got numbed. The sage forgot about the surroundings, and his condition was like a hermit who has attained the state of transcendental existence that is possible in the higher stages of meditation, the stage known as Samadhi when the person loses awareness of even his own body, and is overcome with ecstasy and bliss of the highest order.] (19)

He reverentially observed Lord Ram's pleasant and enchanting image, and repeatedly praised the king's good fortunes and privilege (that he could see the enchanting form of the Supreme Being at so close quarters, he could play with the Lord and shower his love on him, a feat that even the greatest of sages and seers longed for but could not achieve). (20)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas there are other instances also when renowned sages had become overwhelmed with love and affection when they met Lord Ram. Refer:--

- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Doha no. 108 when the Lord met sage Bharadwaj;
- (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 125 when the Lord met sage Valmiki;
- (iii) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 3 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 when the Lord met sage Atri;
- (iv) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 20-24 when the Lord met sage Sutikshan;
- (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-13 that precede Doha no. 12 when the Lord met sage Agastya.]

राउ कहेउ कर जोर सुबचन सुहावन ।
 भयउ कृतार्थ आजु देखि पद पावन ॥ 21 ॥
 तुम्ह प्रभु पूरन काम चारि फलदायक ।
 तेहिं तैं बूझत काजु डरौं मुनिनायक ॥ 22 ॥

rā'u kahē'u kara jōra subacana suhāvana.
 bhaya'u kṛtāratha āju dēkhi pada pāvana. 21.
 tumha prabhu pūrana kāma cāri phaladāyaka.
 tēhiṁ tēm būjhata kāju ḍaraur̥m munināyaka. 22.

21-22. Then the king showed his reverence and sense of gratitude for the sage by bringing together his hands so that their palms touched each other. [This is a traditional method of showing respect to others.]

The king told the sage in a sweet and pleasing voice, ‘Revered sage! I have become privileged and feel honoured at having seen your holy feet. (21)

Oh Lord! You are ever-contented—i.e. you do not desire anything for yourself, and neither do you expect anyone to serve you in anyway. You also possess the mystical power that can bestow all the four legendary fruits (rewards) upon those whom you bless. [These four great fruits or rewards are the following—‘Artha’ or material wealth and prosperity; ‘Dharma’ or success in following the path of righteousness, probity and propriety; ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of all desires; and ‘Moksha’ or attainment of emancipation and salvation for the soul.]

That is why I (Dasrath) feel hesitant and shy to ask you for any service that I can do for you.’

[Dasrath feels hesitant because of two reasons—one is that the sage does not want himself to be obliged to anyone by accepting any thing or service from the other person, and second, the sage is himself empowered to grant the wishes of others, and therefore it is deemed that he can provide his own self with whatever he needs, thereby eliminating the need for others to give him anything at all.] (22)

कौसिक सुनि नृप बचन सराहेउ राजहि ।
धर्म कथा कहि कहेउ गयउ जेहि काजहि ।।23 ।।
जबहिं मुनीस महीसहि काजु सुनायउ ।
भयउ सनेह सत्य बस उतरु न आयउ ।।24 ।।

kausika suni nrpa bacana sarāhē'u rājahi.
dharma kathā kahi kahē'u gaya'u jēhi kājahi. 23.
jabahim munīsa mahīsahi kāju sunāya'u.
bhaya'u sanēha satya basa utaru na āya'u. 24.

23-24. Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) heard these sweet and humble words of the king and lauded him (for his humility, modesty and simplicity). He narrated or cited some episodes pertaining to Dharma (i.e. to the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct, morality and ethics) and then told him the purpose of his visit¹. (23)

When the sage finally disclosed his purpose of visit to the king², the latter was stunned and dumbfounded beyond measure. He was virtually in a stupor, not being able to utter a word of answer, either yes or no. He was literally torn between two extreme emotions and was dangling on the horns of a great and unprecedented dilemma—because on the one hand there was the intense pull of the bond of love that he had for his sons (Ram and Laxman), and on the other hand there was the demand of righteous duty and the need to adhere to the principles of a true upholder of Dharma that was expected from such a great king as he who was renowned the world over precisely for this virtue³. (24)

[Note—¹The intention of the sage in narrating such episodes is to mentally prepare the king for what was to come. The sage wished to take Lord Ram with him for the protection of Dharma which the ruthless demons had been trampling underfoot relentlessly. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that

precedes Doha no. 181; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 184.

But the wise sage knew that the king was so overcome with worldly delusions that he has forgotten who Ram actually was, and what his divine mission on earth was, so it was certain that the king would be most reluctant to let Ram go with him. This is actually what happened—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 208 where the king has flatly denied that he will allow Ram and Laxman to go with the sage.

Therefore, in order to pre-empt stubborn and outright refusal by the king to allow Lord Ram to go with Vishwamitra after some obvious initial phase of reluctance or hesitation, the sage had told him about ancient kings and sages who had made great personal sacrifices to protect and uphold Dharma.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 49-50, it is described how Vishwamitra politely pleaded with king Dasrath to send Ram and Laxman with him.

²Though not mentioned in these verses expressly, the purpose of sage Vishwamitra's visit was to ask Dasrath to lend him Sri Ram and Laxman so that they could protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 207 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 50.

³The king loved all his sons, especially Lord Ram, more than his own life, and to part with Ram was like pulling the heart out of the body. When he heard what the sage wanted, i.e. permission to take Ram and Laxman with him to the dense forest to fight the fierce demons, the king was so terrified that he shook and his lips quivered in utter shock and disbelief. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 208; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 51.

Dasrath did not mince words in flatly telling sage Vishwamitra that he cannot allow Ram to go to the forest with him to face the ruthlessly cruel demons. He is, on the other hand, ready to lay down his life, give the whole kingdom, give as much land, cows, wealth and everything else that he possessed to the sage in lieu of sending Ram and Laxman, but the latter option is certainly not open.

But then, in spite of this initial round of outburst of denial and refusal, the great king had second thoughts. This is where the tactic of Vishwamitra worked. As has been already stated in verse no. 22 above, the sage had already brain-washed him about the need to adhere to the principles of Dharma, and the need to make sacrifices so that Dharma is upheld by telling him many ancient stories of great kings and sages who followed this sacrosanct law to attain liberation and deliverance as well as acquire immense fame, auspiciousness and goodwill.

So, Dasrath feared that if he denied the sage what he wanted—especially when the sage's requests are not for any personal gain such as land, money or other pecuniary benefits, but for the protection of the fire sacrifice and killing of the demons who are tormenting the people of the world—then it would be a grave and an unpardonable sin on the part of Dasrath because it is the moral duty of a great king that anyone who torments his subjects must be brought to book, and by creating an obstacle in fulfillment of this divine duty the concerned king would be committing an horrendous sin.

Therefore, by denying this opportunity to sage Vishwamitra to get rid of the cruel demons and protect his fire sacrifice just because he loves his son Ram too much to let him go with the sage to fulfill his royal duties of a prince—which ordain that a righteous prince must do whatever he can to afford protection to sages and fire sacrifices as well as punish those who make his subjects miserable, such as being done by the demons—the king would invite the wrath of Natural Justice of the Lord God which spares none, and this natural process of punishment and spiritual retribution which such selfish action

would entail in its wake would not be good either for himself nor for the sons who he is trying to protect from facing the wrath of the cruel demons, nor for the kingdom as a whole. In other words, refusing to meet the requests of the sage would invite great horrors for the whole kingdom and the royal family itself.

So, the king was thrown in a whirlpool of dilemma—one moment stoutly denying permission to let Ram go to the forest out of paternal love for his beloved son, and in the other moment thinking that he must let Ram go with the sage because it was his moral duty as a righteous king who has always upheld the laws of Dharma.]

आयउ न उतरु बसिष्ठ लखि बहु भाँति नृप समझायऊ ।
कहि गाधिसुत तप तेज कछु रघुपति प्रभाउ जनायऊ ।।
धीरज धरेउ सुर बचन सुनि कर जोरि कह कोसल धनी ।
करुना निधान सुजान प्रभु सो उचित नहिं बिनती घनी ।।३।।

chanda:

āya'u na utaru basiṣṭha lakhi bahu bhām̐ti nṛpa samajhāya'ū.
kahi gādhisuta tapa tēja kachu raghupati prabhā'u janāya'ū.
dhīraja dharē'u sura bacana suni kara jōri kaha kōsala dhanī.
karunā nidhāna sujāna prabhu sō ucita nahim̐ binatī ghanī. 3.

Chanda 3. [The context of this Chanda: Sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was being defiled by the demons. He went to Ayodhya and asked its king Dasrath to send his sons Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage to kill these demons so that the fire sacrifice could be completed successfully. The king was very reluctant to agree, but his chief royal priest, sage Vashistha persuaded him to agree with Vishwamitra.]

Observing that the king is unable to give a positive, decisive answer to the requests of sage Vishwamitra (as he was dangling on the horns of a dilemma, not being able to decide whether or not to allow Lord Ram to go with the sage), his Guru, sage Vashistha, reasoned with him in various ways (using different logics and arguments to convince the king to send Ram to the forest with the sage, and assuring him of the Lord's absolute safety with Vishwamitra).

[The Guru warned the king of the bad and ominous consequences of denying sage Vishwamitra his wishes. The sage was not asking for any worldly riches or expecting any pecuniary gain. He was seeking the king's help to protect a fire sacrifice and punish the demons who were defiling it, something that was a moral obligation of a great king such as Dasrath who was bound to do everything possible so that this wish—i.e. protection of the fire sacrifice and punishment of its defilers—is fulfilled.

Further, a prince's destiny is not to indulge in sensual pleasures and remain confined to enjoying royal comfort of a palace, but to move out and extend support and protection to the subjects of his kingdom whenever and wherever they are in distress. Failure on both these counts will boomerang on the king and his reputation.

Not only this, by denying sage Vishwamitra his wishes there is a chance that the great sage may curse him, and should this happen there will be no solution. This eventuality would be most horrifying, and it would be far better therefore to play it safe now and concede to the sage's wishes before the worst happens. So, if the king willingly

and cheerfully allows Ram to go with the sage then it would be the sage's responsibility to take care of Ram as well as the future happiness of the king towards whom the sage will morally obliged. In the present situation, this will be the best and the wisest action to be taken by Dasrath.

As for the doubt in the king's mind about the integrity and abilities of sage Vishwamitra, Vashistha vouched on his behalf and assured the king that he need not worry at all about anything as Vishwamitra was a powerful and able sage, and that by conceding to his requests the sage would be obliged to reciprocate to the gesture liberally by doing something that would ensure fabulous good tidings for the whole kingdom. That is why the Guru told the king that Vishwamitra was 'an ocean of mercy and compassion' as reiterated by the king himself when he addressed the latter while agreeing to send Ram and Laxman with the sage.]

On the one hand Vashistha narrated to the king the immaculate reputation and immense glories of sage Vishwamitra (known as 'Gaadhisut', the son of sage Gaadhi), as well as the great mystical powers that he possessed by the virtue of severe Tapa (doing severe penances and austerities) that he did, and on the other hand he told the king about his moral responsibilities along with the secrets of Lord Ram's own greatness and divinity (as a prince who was not an ordinary one, but one who had a divine mission to accomplish in this world, a prince whose stupendous glories and great strength that had lain hidden hitherto needed to be brought out in the open by giving him an opportunity to move out of the comfort and cloistered life of a palace, and into the world to face its harsh realities, to conquer obstacles and to learn to fight for Dharma, and sharpen his skills and prove his mettle while assured of iron-clad safety under the able protection of a mighty sage of the stature of sage Vishwamitra—say, where else would such a golden opportunity come again?).

Hearing the words of prudent advice given by his Guru, the king somehow gathered courage and felt reassured. Then the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. the king of Ayodhya; Dasrath) held his palms together as a gesture of paying respect to sage Vishwamitra, and said to him, 'Oh Lord! You are an ocean of mercy and compassion as well as aware of all the things. Hence, it is not proper to talk much (and argue and discuss the matter further) before you.

[In other words, you are wise and learned, and you know what is good for me as well as for my beloved son Ram. In fact, as a great and able sage, I feel assured of our well-being and safety in your hands. On the other hand, it will not only be unrighteous but also unpardonably sinful to deny a sage of your stature his wish. That would be ruinous for the entire kingdom and bring immense disrepute to its king who prides himself on his reputation as an upholder of Dharma—that this king had denied a great sage his wish to help him eliminate the horrors that cruel demons have unleashed on innocent people of the world family. Therefore it would be a shameful act on my part if I disallowed Ram to go with you just because of filial considerations—me being his father who is worried about his son's safety. Hence, on the wise advice given to me by my learned Guru, sage Vashistha, I have realised that I need not worry about either my welfare or that of my son Ram, and that it is most prudent and wise to let him accompany you to protect your fire sacrifice.]' (3)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8. It speaks of the same thing.

When king Dasrath was hesitant to allow his son Ram to go to the forest to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra and fight the demons, the king's royal priest, sage Vashistha took him aside and reasoned with him. He explained to the king the pros and cons of his decision, and told him that he need not worry about the safety of Ram with Vishwamitra as the sage was amply able to protect him as he possessed immense mystical powers.

A question arises here that if Vishwamitra was so powerful that no harm would befall upon the young princes when he was with them, then why could he not protect his own fire sacrifice? The answer is given in Valmiki's Ramayana where Vishwamitra explained that he could not kill the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice because he had taken a vow of observing self-restraint, maintain mental calmness and serenity, and not being angry or wrathful on anyone while the sacrifice was in progress. If he punished the demons by cursing them, then it would violate this vow, and the whole exercise would be spoilt.

Refer: (i) Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 19, verse nos. 7-20; (ii) Tulsidas' Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 47, stanza nos. 1-2, and verse no. 66, stanza no. 2.]

नाथ मोहि बालकन्ह सहित पुर परिजन ।
 राखनिहार तुम्हार अनुग्रह घर बन ॥25॥
 दीन बचन बहु भाँति भूप मुनि सन कहे ।
 साँपि राम अरु लखन पाय पंकज गहे ॥26॥

nātha mōhi bālakanha sahita pura parijana.
 rākhanihāra tumhāra anugraha ghara bana. 25.
 dīna bacana bahu bhāmṭi bhūpa muni sana kahē.
 saumpi rāma aru lakhana pāya paṅkaja gahē. 26.

25-26. King Dasrath told sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh Lord! It is indeed your grace and blessings that gives all of us—me, the children as well as the subjects of the entire kingdom—protection, whether we live in a city or in the forest.’

[The king was initially afraid of the safety of his sons Ram and Laxman when he opposed sending them to the forest with sage Vishwamitra. But when his royal priest, sage Vashistha, explained everything to him and assured him about the safety of the two princes in the hands of Vishwamitra by enlightening the king about the latter's immense powers, the king finally conceded. This has been narrated above in Chanda no. 3.] (25)

The king said many such words of humility and submission to the sage, then handed over Lord Sri Ram and Laxman to him. The king kneeled down and clasped the sage's lotus-like feet as an act of seeking his protection and a gesture of submission before the great sage. (26)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10. They speak of the same thing. Here, the king called Ram and Laxman, affectionately embraced them, and made them bow before the sage. Then he handed them over to the sage, saying—“Oh Sage. These two sons are like my Pran (life). You are no one else but like their father. I am handing over them and their responsibility now onwards to you. Take care as you think fit.” Saying this, the king handed over the two princes to sage Vishwamitra.]

पाइ मातु पितु आयसु गुरु पायन्ह परे ।
 कटि निषंग पट पीत करनि सर धनु धरे ॥ 27 ॥
 पुरबासी नृप रानिन्ह संग दिये मन ।
 बेगि फिरेउ करि काजु कुसल रघुनंदन ॥ 28 ॥

pā'i mātu pitu āyasu guru pāyanha parē.
 kaṭi niṣaṅga paṭa pīta karani sara dhanu dharē. 27.
 purabāsī nr̥pa rāninha saṅga diyē mana.
 bēgi phirē'u kari kāju kusala raghunandana. 28.

27-28. At the instructions of their father as well as their mother, they (Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) fell at the feet of the Guru (i.e. sage Vashistha) to pay their respects to the great sage. The two brothers had a quiver and Pitambar (a silk seamless golden-coloured cloth) tied around their waists, and they held a bow and an arrow in their hands¹. (27)

The citizens, the king and the queens were extremely sad at the moment Ram and Laxman were preparing to go with sage Vishwamitra. They became overwhelmed with emotions and literally sent their hearts and minds along with Raghunandan (i.e. the son of the Raghu's clan, Lord Sri Ram) as he went out to accompany the sage to the forest, by saying—‘Oh our beloved Raghunandan! Once you have finished the designated work of the sage (Vishwamitra), please come back immediately. [Remember this—the time that we have to spend without you will be most burdensome for us, and it is impossible for us to live without you in our midst for a long time. So, do come back as soon as possible.²’]’ (28)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 209 that say—“The Lord (Ram) has large lotus-like red/pink eyes; his chest is broad; and his arms are large and long. His complexion is dark like the blue lotus flower or the dark shade of the catechu plant. He has Pitambar and a beautiful quiver (to hold arrows) tied to his waist. He holds a magnificent bow and an arrow in his hands. The great sage Vishwamitra was indeed very fortunate to have acquired the company of the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) having a dark and fair complexion respectively, and who are exceptionally beautiful to behold.”

²Lord Ram was extremely dear not only to his parents but also to the citizens of Ayodhya in equal terms. This is clear when the Lord was heading to his 14-year forest exile as narrated in Ram Charit Manas. In its Ayodhya Kand there is an extensive narration of how the grieving citizens ran after the chariot which was taking the Lord away from the city—refer: Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86; and (iii) Doha no. 118.

Once again, when Bharat was returning from Chitrakoot with Lord Ram's sandal, an overwhelming sense of gloom, dejection, despair and dismay spread over all the people like a thick blanket as they walked silently back home in a state of numbness and complete stupor. Even after their return to Ayodhya they lived a life of pain, misery and grief, ever lost in the memory of their beloved Lord, and waiting for the time when the Lord will finally come back to inject cheer and happiness in their lives once again—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 322 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

ईस मनाइ असीसहिं जय जसु पावहु ।
 न्हात खसै जनि बार गहरु जनि लावहु ।।29।।
 चलत सकल पुर लोग बियोग बिकल भए ।
 सानुज भरत सप्रेम राम पायन्ह नए ।।30।।

īsa manā'i asīsaḥim̐ jaya jasu pāvahu.
 nhāta khasai jani bāra gaharu jani lāvahu. 29.
 calata sakala pura lōga biyōga bikala bha'ē.
 sānuja bharata saprēma rāma pāyanha na'ē. 30.

29-30. All of them (i.e. the parents, the Guru, and the citizens of Ayodhya) invoked their patron God (i.e. Lord Shiva) and blessed Sri Ram and Laxman, saying, 'You should achieve victory and fame. Let not a single hair of your head fall while you bathe (i.e. let not a single hair of yours be harmed; let Lord Shiva give you absolute protection). And look, don't delay in coming back (as soon as the work of securing sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice is completed).' (29)

At the time of their (Ram and Laxman's) departure, all the residents of the city were overwhelmed with anguish and grief that comes with separation from someone whom one loves very dearly. Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) bowed at the feet of Sri Ram as a mark of respect and farewell. (30)

होहिं सकुल सुभ मंगल जनु कहि दीन्हैउ ।
 राम लखन मुनि साथ गवन तब कीन्हैउ ।।31।।
 स्यामल गौर किसोर मनोहरता निधि ।
 सुषमा सकल सकेलि मनहुँ बिरचे बिधि ।।32।।

hōhim̐ sakula subha maṅgala janu kahi dīnhē'u.
 rāma lakhana muni sātha gavana taba kīnhē'u. 31.
 syāmala gaura kisōra manōharatā nidhi.
 suṣamā sakala sakēli manahum̐ biracē bidhi. 32.

31-32. At that time, many different good signs began to appear as if to forecast an auspicious future. Then Sri Ram and Laxman left with sage Vishwamitra (for his hermitage in the forest to protect his fire sacrifice). (31)

They were respectively of a dark and fair complexion (i.e. Lord Ram was dark, and his younger brother Laxman was fair complexioned), were in their teens, and both of them appeared to be a treasury of charm, magnificence and beauty, enchanting the mind the heart of all those who beheld them. It looked as if the creator Brahma has created them out of all the beauty, majesty, charm, magnificence and grandeur that ever existed in the world. [In other words, the beauty, the charm, the magnificence and the glamour of the two brothers was matchless, and it seemed that the creator has extracted the best of everything that was beautiful, magnificence, charming and glamorous to create these two young brothers, Ram and Laxman.]¹ (32)

[Note—¹The exceptionally beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman going to the forest alongside sage Vishwamitra has been extensively described by Tulsidas in his book 'Geetawali', Baal Kand, verse nos. 52—56. It makes a very fascinating reading, and since it is not practical to include these verses here, the reader is advised to look up my English version of Geetawali which has been published separately.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

बिरचे बिरंचि बनाइ बाँची रुचिरता रंचौ नहीं।
 दस चारि भुवन निहारि देखि बिचारि नहिं उपमा कहीं॥
 रिषि संग सोहत जात मग छबि बसत सो तुलसी हिउँ।
 कियो गवन जनु दिननाथ उत्तर संग मधु माधव लिउँ॥4॥

chanda:

biracē biran̄ci banā'i bām̄cī ruciratā rañcai nahīm.
 dasa cāri bhuvana nihāri dēkhi bicāri nahīm upamā kahīm.
 riṣi saṅga sōhata jāta maga chabi basata sō tulasī hi'ēm̄.
 kiyō gavana janu dinanātha utara saṅga madhu mādhave li'ēm̄. 4.

Chanda 4. The creator Brahma had created them so meticulously and immaculately beautiful that it appears no beauty, charm and magnificence remained as a residue after their creation (i.e. all such good qualities of the world were exhausted in moulding or crafting the bewitching forms of Lord Ram and Laxman).

We have searched and looked around very carefully in all the 14 Bhuvans (territories, segments, parts and areas of the universe created by Brahma) but there is nothing to compare them with. They look very magnificent and charming while on their way alongside the sage (Vishwamitra).

This (stupendously charming) image of them (Ram and Laxman) has enshrined itself in the heart of Tulsidas. The sight reminds one of the Sun migrating towards the north of the equinox along with Madhu (i.e. the month of Chaitra or mid March-April) and Maadhav (i.e. May-June)¹. (Chanda 4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 51, 2nd line of stanza no. 3 that also states the same thing.

In the present Chanda, sage Vishwamitra is the Sun, Sri Ram is Madhu, and Laxman is Maadhav. This is a metaphor that refers to the winter solistice when the sun migrates to the north of the celestial equator. The sage is compared to the 'Sun' because he is radiant with the positive aura that surrounds him due the intense Tapa (penances and austerities) that he had done. Ram and Laxman have been compared to Madhu and Maadhav in this verse.

This comparison is very interesting. The sun is at its brightest best during the summer months that are at their peak during May and June. Before that, during the earlier months of March and April, the chill and grey of winter has ended and spring has brought cheer and colour to the countryside. Hence, though sage Vishwamitra's Tapa had bestowed him with a divine glow, it was made more brilliant when Lord Ram and Laxman accompanied him. Lord Ram is like the spring season that brings cheer all around, when new leaves sprout on trees and there is colour and greenery everywhere. Laxman is a brave warrior,

and he is as strong and unbearable as the heat of the vicious summer months. It is during this period of the year that the sun appears at its brightest glory. After that, the rainy season sets in and the sun gets hidden behind clouds.

In other words, when sage Vishwamitra walked along with Ram and Laxman, his excitement and exhilaration knew no bounds, and this reflected in his demeanours and countenance—he bore a perpetually infective smile, his face glowed, and the happiness of having the company of the Supreme Being in a physical form was enough to charge the sage with an immense surge of dynamic spiritual energy that bubbled over and spilled all around him.]

गिर तरु बेलि सरित सर बिपुल बिलोकहिं ।
धावहिं बाल सुभाय बिहग मृग रोकहिं ।।33 ।।
सकुचहिं मुनिहि सभित बहुरि फिरि आवहिं ।
तोरि फूल फल किसलय माल बनावहिं ।।34 ।।

gira taru bēli sarita sara bipula bilōkahim.
dhāvahim bāla subhāya bihaga mṛga rōkahim. 33.
sakucahim munihi sabhita bahuri phiri āvahim.
tōri phūla phala kisalaya māla banāvahim. 34.

33-34. They (the two brothers) excitedly look at different mountains, hills, trees, creepers, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds etc. while on their way to the sage's hermitage. They run behind and try to stop the birds and deer (or other pleasant and harmless animals) from running away from them in a manner behooving children of their age¹. (33)

Then they get scared of the sage (fearing that he shall be annoyed), and come back to him. Then at other times, they pluck flowers, fruits and leaves, and string a garland out of them. (34)

[Note—Such a wonderful and fascinating imagery! A similar description is found in Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; (ii) verse no. 54, stanza nos. 3-4; (iii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 5; (iv) verse no. 56, stanza no. 5.

Later on in life, when Lord Ram and Laxman were going to their 14-year exile along with Sita, the Lord had also watched the beautiful scene of the mountains, hills, rivers, trees with their flowers and fruits as he moved ahead in the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

देखि बिनोद प्रमोद प्रेम कौसिक उर ।
करत जाहिं घन छाँह सुमन बरषहिं सुर ।।35 ।।
बधी ताड़का राम जानि सब लायक ।
बिद्या मंत्र रहस्य दिए मुनिनायक ।।36 ।।

dēkhi binōda pramōda prēma kausika ura.
karata jāhim ghana chāmha sumana baraṣahim sura. 35.
badhī tāṛakā rāma jāni saba lāyaka.

bidyā mantra rahasya di'ē munināyaka. 36.

35-36. Watching the joyful and pleasant playful activities (of Sri Ram and Laxman), the heart of the sage gets overwhelmed with delight and joy as well as a surge of love and affection for them¹. The clouds provide shade and the Gods rain flowers on the path². (35)

About that time, Sri Ram slayed (the demoness known as) Taadka³. Seeing the two brothers fully eligible and worthy of being imparted knowledge, the sage gave them the holy Mantra—i.e. revealed to them the formula and secrets of the art and science of weapons and warfare. [He taught the two brothers the secrets of many powerful and invincible weapons, as well as the intricacies and methods to use them during battle, both to attack the enemy as well as for self-defence.]⁴ (36)

[Note—¹Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; (ii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 7.

²When the Lord walks on the path, the clouds cheerfully and willingly provide shade for him, and the Gods shower flowers to soften the ground below. They feel privileged to have got this opportunity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113. Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 53, stanza no. 3; (ii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 4.

³Taadka was a demoness who attacked the party of Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra as they were on their way to the hermitage of the sage. Lord Ram killed her with a single arrow when sage Vishwamitra gave him orders—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209;

(ii) In Geetawali, Baal Kand, there are numerous references to the killing of Taadka as follows—verse no. 55, stanza no. 6; verse no. 52, stanza no. 6; verse no. 63, stanza no. 4; verse no. 67, stanza no. 2; verse no. 68, stanza no. 3.

⁴Taadka was not an ordinary demoness. It was not easy to kill her. So when Lord Ram killed her with a single arrow, the sage realised finally that Ram was not an ordinary prince, and that he had the potential, the strength, the powers and the prowess to actually defeat the mighty demons and free the earth of their tyranny. So the sage decided to empower the two brothers with skills and knowledge that will help them achieve this noble objective of eliminating the demons. The killing of Taadka was the test that proved to Vishwamitra that Ram was an eligible candidate to whom the secret of mystical weapons must be divulged.

It has been expressly said so in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8. To quote—“The great sage recognized his Lord. The sage then imparted the mystical knowledge of secret weapons to him (Lord Ram) though the Lord was deemed to have all knowledge, being a personified form of the all-knowing Supreme Being. But nevertheless, to comply with the requirements of his formal form as a human being, the sage observed the formality of giving knowledge to the ‘Lord of all knowledge’. This mystical knowledge empowered the person to be free from thirst and hunger, amongst other things. It gave the holder of this knowledge an incomparably immense strength and dynamic powers; it made his body glow with radiance and splendour as it became infused with dynamic energy of divine proportions. Not only this, the sage surrendered to the Lord all the mystical weapons (i.e. invisible weapons that could be invoked as and when they were needed) that he possessed. That is, the sage told the secret formula by which these invincible and powerful weapons could be invoked and used against one’s opponent.”

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 52, stanza no. 6 it is said that “sage Vishwamitra taught Lord Ram and Laxman the art of archery. With this knowledge, Lord Ram had killed Taadka with a single arrow.”]

मग लोगन्हके करत सुफल मन लोचन ।
गए कौसिक आश्रमहिं बिप्र भय मोचन ॥37॥
मारि निसाचर निकर जग्य करवायउ ।
अभय किए मुनिबृंद जगत जसु गायउ ॥38॥

maga lōganhakē karata suphala mana lōcana.
ga'ē kausika āśramahim bipra bhaya mōcana. 37.
māri nisācara nikara jagya karavāya'u.
abhaya ki'ē munibr̥nda jagata jasu gāya'u. 38.

37-38. Making the people who lived along the way fully contented in their hearts and minds by the magnificent sight of the two brothers (Ram and Laxman), and making them feel that they have got the full reward of having eyes (as they were able to watch the bewitching beauty of the two brothers as they wended their way through the villages and hamlets along the way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra), Lord Ram—who is the vanquisher of the fear of Brahmins—went to the hermitage of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). (37)

Then, he (Sri Ram) destroyed (killed) the hordes of demons (who were defiling the fire sacrifice) and helped the sage to complete his fire sacrifice without any hindrance¹, thereby making all the sages, hermits and seers feel reassured and fearless from the scare of the mighty and cruel demons. The whole world erupted in joy as it sang and lauded this great deed of the Lord. (38)

[Note—¹This episode is mentioned in—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210 where it is stated that amongst the demons killed was Subahu who was scorched with a fire-tipped arrow, and Marich who was spared his life by being flung far off to an island that lay one hundred Yojans away into the ocean. {1 Yojan = 8 miles.}

Refer also to—(a) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 55, stanza no. 9; (ii) verse no. 56, stanza no. 6; (iii) verse no. 60, stanza nos. 1-3; (iv) verse no. 63, stanza no. 4; (v) verse no. 67, stanza no. 2.

(b) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 21, stanza no. 1.]

Departure of Sri Ram for Sita's Swayambar

बिप्र साधु सुर काजु महामुनि मन धरि ।
रामहि चले लिवाइ धनुष मख मिसु करि ॥39॥
गौतम नारि उधारि पटै पति धामहि ।
जनक नगर लै गयउ महामुनि रामहि ॥40॥

bipra sādhu sura kāju mahāmuni mana dhari.
rāmahi calē livā'i dhanuṣa makha misu kari. 39.

gautama nāri udhāri paṭhai pati dhāmahi.
janaka nagara lai gaya'u mahāmuni rāmahi. 40.

39-40. Thereafter, the great sage (Vishwamitra) embarked on the next phase of his mission, which was to accomplish the task of Brahmins, saints and Gods. [This mission was to make them happy by bringing about a union of Lord Vishnu's human form as Ram with the Lord's eternal cosmic counterpart, goddess Laxmi who had manifested herself as Sita, and pave the way for the ultimate elimination of the cruel demons for which purpose Vishnu had to come to earth in the first place.]

So, with this objective in mind, the sage moved ahead and went on a journey (to Janakpur) to witness the 'Danush Yagya', a ceremony in which the formidable bow of Lord Shiva was to play the central role. He took Ram and Laxman along on the pretext of making them also witness this rare spectacle (and in the process fulfill the wishes of the Brahmins, saints, sages and Gods)¹. (39)

On the way, (by the touch of Sri Ram's divine and holy feet) sage Gautam's wife (Ahilya) was freed (from her curse that had turned her into a rock/stone). Freed from the curse, Ahilya reverted to her divine form and sent back to her husband Gautam². Then the great sage brought Lord Ram to Janak's city (i.e. Janakpur). (40)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.

²The story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60.

The story of Ahilya in brief is as follows—

She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.]

लै गयउ रामहि गाधि सुवन बिलोकि पुर हरषे हिऐँ ।
 सुनि राउ आगे लेन आयउ सचिव गुर भूसुर लिऐँ ॥
 नृप गहे पाय असीस पाई मान आदर अति किऐँ ।
 अवलोकि रामहि अनुभवत मनु ब्रह्मसुख सौगुन किऐँ ॥ 5 ॥

chanda:

lai gaya'u rāmahī gādhi suvana bilōki pura haraṣē hi'ēm̃.
 suni rā'u āgē lēna āya'u saciva gura bhūsura li'ēm̃.
 nrpa gahē pāya asīsa pā'ī māna ādara ati ki'ēm̃.
 avalōki rāmahī anubhavata manu brahmasukha sauguna ki'ēm̃. 5.

Chanda 5. The son of sage Gaadhi (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) took Sri Ram to the city (of Janakpur). They felt extremely delighted in their hearts on seeing the city¹.

Hearing of their arrival, the king (Janak) came forward to meet and welcome them. He was accompanied by his ministers, Guru and Brahmins (i.e. elders of the royal court). The king knelt down to clasp the sage's feet (in reverence), and was blessed by him in return. Then he showed great respect and honour to the sage and formally invited him to the city to attend the ceremony².

He (the king) felt a hundred times more happy and contented than the joys of attainment of Brahm (supreme reality) at the sight of Sri Ram³. (Chanda 5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 214.

²Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 215; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 61; verse 69, stanza no. 1.

³Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 64-65; verse no. 69, stanza no. 3.]

देखि मनोहर मूरति मन अनुरागेउ ।
 बँधेउ सनेह बिदेह बिराग बिरागेउ ॥ 41 ॥
 प्रमुदित हृदयँ सराहत भल भवसागर ।
 जहँ उपजहिँ अस मानिक बिधि बड़ नागर ॥ 42 ॥

dēkhi manōhara mūrati mana anurāgē'u.
 bam̃dhē'u sanēha bidēha birāga birāgē'u. 41.
 pramudita hr̥dayam̃ sarāhata bhala bhavasāgara.
 jaham̃ upajahim̃ asa mānika bidhi barā nāgara. 42.

41-42. At the sight of that enchanting and captivating image (of Sri Ram), love and affection sprouted in the heart of the king. He got tied with the Lord by the thread of love and affection, and all his so-called dispassion, detachment and renunciation which made

him famous by the name of Videh (literally, one who is detached from his body), vanished¹. (41)

He praised this gross world (inspite of him being enlightened enough to know that it is illusionary and entrapping for the soul of the creature, and not something one would like to choose if given a choice). He was so excited and exhilarated in his heart that he exclaimed—‘Ironically, this Bhavsagar (i.e. mundane, deluding, artificial world that is compared to a fathomless vast ocean which is said to trap the soul in an endless cycle of birth and death, as well as the one that keep the creature eternally tormented by the pulls and tugs of its illusive material charms) appears at last to be so pleasant and good because it is here that such excellent gems (here represented by Lord Ram and Laxman) are produced. Really, the creator Brahma is very clever indeed².’ (42)

[Note—¹Janak was an enlightened king, and was renowned for his in-depth knowledge of the eclectic spiritual philosophy of the scriptures. As a result of this spiritual knowledge he was deemed to be detached from and unmoved by all sorts of visual attractions of the physical world, including being bewitched by the physical charm of any person. But when he saw Lord Ram he all but forgot about his principles of remaining detached and indifferent to all attractions that have their genesis in one being able to get distracted by the physical charms of the world that one perceives with the help of the organ of sight, i.e. the eye. The sight of Lord Ram caught his imagination though he was supposed to be neutral to what the eyes see in this world. This incident of Janak losing his detached composure and indifference to what is pleasant to behold and what is not is cited by Tulsidas to emphasise the magnitude of Lord Ram’s charm and magnificence. If the Lord’s physical presence and the beauty of his countenance could sway the completely neutral mind and heart of king Janak who was singularly famous for this great spiritual virtue of being unmoved by and unconcerned with anything physical, then it is easy to imagine what effect the Lord’s sight would be on ordinary mortals of the world. This is a sort of a prelude of what is to follow. When Lord Ram and Laxman went on a sight-seeing round of the city of Janakpur, the whole city was stunned by the most bewitchingly beautiful sight of the two brothers as they meandered their way through the city’s lanes, streets and avenues.

²King Janak refers to the beauty and charm of Sri Ram and Laxman when he refers to the excellent gems. This shows that he has all but forgotten that he is considered a renunciate king amongst all the worldly kings.

The physical visible gross world is called Bhavsagar as it is like a vast, fathomless ocean which is most difficult to cross. No wise and enlightened man would like to come here if he gets the fortunate chance to get away from its horrifying experiences. But the same detestable world has one big benefit—it is here that the Lord appears in his visible form that one can see and cherish. The cosmic form of the Supreme Being is invisible and indiscernible, but it is only in this physical gross world that the Lord has revealed himself in a physical form on the prayers of his devotees to perform divine acts and deeds that the rest of the world sings and derives immense pleasure and happiness from. It is in this gross physical world that one can see the otherwise unseen form of the Lord God, he can hear the Lord speak and spoken about, he can physically worship the Lord and make offerings to him, he can live with the Lord and play with the Lord—just like the people who had done at the time Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Ram on this earth.

Therefore, inspite of all its drawbacks and shortcomings, despite of it being the cause of all spiritual hurdles for the creature, there is one great virtue with this world—it is here that the Lord manifests himself to live amongst us mortals like one of us, though of course it is another matter that we do not recognize him in our midst. Only a few wise, enlightened and realised souls who have managed to open their inner subtle eyes of

insight and wisdom are able to see and recognize the Lord in their midst just like the case of an expert jeweler being able to see the priceless gem concealed in the stone lying unnoticed on the ground, and picking it up, while the rest of the world just walks past it. This is why the wise king Janak praises this world inspite of calling it a 'Bhavsagar' to indicate that he is fully aware that the world he praises is a trap for the soul.]

पुन्य पयोधि मातु पितु ए सिसु सुरतरु ।
 रूप सुधा सुख देत नयन अमरनि बरु ।।43 ।।
 केहि सुकृती के कुँअर कहिय मुनिनायक ।
 गौर स्याम छबि धाम धरें धनु सायक ।।44 ।।

pun'ya payōdhi mātu pitu ē sisu surataru.
 rūpa sudhā sukha dēta nayana amarani baru. 43.
 kēhi sukr̥tī kē kumāra kahiya munināyaka.
 gaura syāma chabi dhāma dharēm dhanu sāyaka. 44.

43-44. [Here, Janak praised the lucky parents of Lord Ram and Laxman.]

Their parents are like an ocean of good and noble deeds as well as auspiciousness. [In other words, their parents must have done a lot of virtuous deeds and auspicious things that they were blessed with such wonderful sons.]

Their (parent's) eyes represent the Gods who were feeling contented by the beautiful and enchanting sight of the Kalpa Tree represented by these children. [The 'Kalpa Tree' is the all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods. It gives whatever the Gods desire. The desire of the 'eye' is to see things that are nice and pleasant, things that give peace and happiness to the mind and the heart. The sight of Ram and Laxman gives the same happiness and peace to their parents, fulfilling all their desires as parents, just like the Kalpa Tree gives happiness, peace and contentedness to the Gods.] (43)

Oh the chief amongst the sages (i.e. Vishwamitra)! Please tell me whose sons are these two beautiful children, the one with a fair complexion and the one with a dark complexion, who hold a bow and arrow in their hands?¹ (44)

[Note—¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 215; Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand—verse nos. 64-65; verse no. 69, stanza no. 3.]

बिषय बिमुख मन मोर सेइ परमारथ ।
 इन्हहिं देखि भयो मगन जानि बड़ स्वारथ ।।45 ।।
 कहेउ सप्रेम पुलकि मुनि सुनि महिपालक ।
 ए परमारथ रूप ब्रह्ममय बालक ।।46 ।।

biṣaya bimukha mana mōra sē'i paramāratha.
 inhahim dēkhi bhayō magana jāni barā svāratha. 45.
 kahē'u saprēma pulaki muni suni mahipālaka.
 ē paramāratha rūpa brahmamaya bālaka. 46.

45-46. Regular contemplation on the pure self as well as on the supreme reality and the absolute truth of creation has made my mind and heart turn away from the materialistic world of sensual pleasures and objects. Instead of the world, I prefer to think and dwell constantly on spiritual matters and the soul. But when I observe the two brothers (Ram and Laxman), my mind and heart become enthralled and captivated by them, thinking that it is in their best interest. [That is, when I see Ram and Laxman I feel that my sight has been fully rewarded, and all my spiritual efforts till now have borne fruit.] (45)

[Seeing this ecstatic mental condition of Janak—] The sage (Vishwamitra) became thrilled and said most affectionately—‘Oh the Lord of the earth (because Janak was a king)! These children are an image of Brahm, the Supreme Being. [And this is why you are so enamoured of them. There is no wonder in your getting so enthralled at their sight because they are not ordinary princes but images of the Lord. Since you always think and contemplate of Brahm, and Brahm is standing right in your front in the form of Ram, I am not at all surprised at your ecstatic condition. It is expected and natural.]¹ (46)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 216, the same idea is expressed, but while in our present text above it is the sage who discloses this fact, in Ram Charit Manas it is Janak who wonders if Ram is indeed Brahm because otherwise it is impossible that his mind and heart would have got so enamoured of Ram him if he had been only an ordinary prince.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 61, stanza no. 4, and the whole of verse no. 65.]

पूषन बंस बिभूषन दसरथ नंदन ।
नाम राम अरु लखन सुरारि निकंदन ।। 47 ।।
रूप सील बय बंस राम परिपूरन ।
समुझि कठिन पन आपन लाग बिसूरन ।। 48 ।।

pūṣana bansa bibhūṣana dasaratha nandana.
nāma rāma aru lakhana surāri nikandana. 47.
rūpa sīla baya bansa rāma paripūrana.
samujhi kaṭhina pana āpana lāga bisūrana. 48.

47-48. [Sage Vishwamitra introduced Lord Ram and Laxman to Janak as follows—]

They are the jewels of the sun-race (the solar dynasty that descended from the Sun God), and are the sons of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya). Their names are Ram and Laxman respectively, and they are the destroyers of demons.¹ (47)

Sri Ram is wholesome in respect of beauty, noble characters, fine virtues, noble pedigree and proper age (i.e. he is in his teens and has attained a marrigable age). [In other words, the sage indirectly recommended to Janak to consider Ram as a suitable candidate for becoming a groom for his daughter Sita for whom he has organized the bow ceremony. The wise sage chose the correct moment to advocate Ram’s case as a suitable groom for Janak’s daughter because the king has just now shown keen interest in the two princes, Ram and Laxman, and the sage thought that a word of recommendation on his part may help Janak make up his mind in favour of Ram.]’

The king heard all this (i.e. the subtle hint that the sage was giving to him about Ram being an eligible bachelor and a suitable candidate to be selected as the groom), but

remembering his stern vows (that Sita would be married only to someone who lifts and strings the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva, and that he cannot unilaterally decide to select Ram as the groom for his daughter at this late hour when countless other princes have already arrived, and with the ceremony scheduled for the next day in full public view it is unthinkable at this late stage to rescind on his vows) the king became very pensive, gloomy and depressed. [This was because though Janak personally favoured and liked to see Ram as the groom for his daughter Sita, the things were in such a fix that he cannot do so. Janak was mentally regretting his own decision to hold the bow ceremony, and his mind churned rapidly to find some way out so that he could wriggle out of his dilemma, save his face and reputation, and somehow be able to marry Sita with Ram. But it appeared to be an impossible task. See Chanda no. 6 below.] (48)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 66-68, and especially stanza no. 2 of verse no. 69.]

लागे बिसूरन समुझि पन मन बहुरि धीरज आनि कै ।
लै चले देखावन रंगभूमि अनेक बिधि सनमानि कै ।।
कौसिक सराही रुचिर रचना जनक सुनि हरषित भए ।
तब राम लखन समेत मुनि कहँ सुभग सिंहासन दए ।। 6 ।।

chanda:

lāgē bisūrana samujhi pana mana bahuri dhīraja āni kai.
lai calē dēkhāvana raṅgabhūmi anēka bidhi sanamāni kai.
kausika sarāhī rucira racanā janaka suni haraṣita bha'ē.
taba rāma lakhana samēta muni kaham' subhaga sinhāsana da'ē. 6.

Chanda 6. He (Janak) became deeply pensive when he remembered his vows (that Sita would be married only to that person who strings Lord Shiva's bow). Gradually he overcame his depressive thoughts and regained his composure, patiently expressing a lot of respect and giving due honour to them (Ram and Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra). Then he took them along to show them around the arena where the challenging ceremony of the bow was to be held.

Kaushik (Vishwamitra) lauded the grandeur and magnificence of the venue, hearing which the king felt very delighted. Then he gave the sage a magnificent throne to sit upon, along with Sri Ram and Laxman. (Chanda no. 6)

[Note—By reading this Chanda it appears that after welcoming sage Vishwamitra and meeting Ram and Laxman, king Janak escorted them directly to the venue of the bow ceremony, took them around so they could see it, and then seated them at some place that was earmarked for special guests of honour.

But a different version is narrated in the Ram Charit Manas as well as Geetawali. There it is mentioned that after their meeting the king went home to his palace, and sage Vishwamitra, Ram and Laxman to the place designated for their stay by the king. It was on the morning of the next day that the sage and the two brothers were formally invited by messengers of Janak to come to the venue of the bow ceremony. When the three reached there, Janak gave them a high seat of honour to sit upon.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 240 where it is narrated how messengers were sent by the king to bring the sage along with the two brothers to the venue of the bow ceremony; and Doha no. 244 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that narrate how the king escorted them around the venue and then gave them a high throne to sit upon.

Earlier, in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217 it said that after meeting the sage and the two brothers, the king went to his palace.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 69, stanza no. 1 that says that the king went to his palace after meeting them; and verse no. 68, stanza no. 6 that says that they went to the venue of the bow ceremony the next morning at the invitation of king Janak.]

Sri Ram in the arena of the bow-lifting ceremony

राजत राज समाज जुगल रघुकुल मनि ।
मनहुँ सरद बिधु उभय नखत धरनी धर ।। 49 ।।
काकपच्छ सिर सुभग सरोरुह लोचन ।
गौर स्याम सत कोटि काम मद मोचन ।। 50 ।।

rājata rāja samāja jugala raghukula mani.
manahum̐ sarada bidhu ubhaya nakhata dharanī dhara. 49.
kākapaccha sira subhaga sarōruha lōcana.
gaura syāma sata kōṭi kāma mada mōcana. 50.

49-50. Those two jewels of the Raghu's clan (a reference to Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) looked so glorious and magnificent in that assembly of kings as if two moons of a winter's night are present simultaneously amidst the countless stars represented by the huge throng of kings. (49)

The two brothers present a wonderful and most enchanting sight to behold with beautiful curled hairs on their heads, beautiful eyes which are like the lotus flower*, and handsome bodies, which are of a dark and fair complexion respectively, are so bewitchingly attractive that they trounce the pride and vanity of millions of Kamdeocupid. (50)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 in a general way.

Specifically, refer: Doha no. 242; Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 243.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 73-79.

*It is to be noted here that in Indian scriptures, the eyes and the feet of Lord Ram are invariably compared to the 'lotus flower'. What is the significance of this comparison? Well, for one, it is to indicate that they are beautiful like the lotus flower, but there is a deeper meaning to it. The lotus flower grows in a pond whose water may be dirty and polluted but still none of the filth is said to stick to the petals of the lotus which manages to retain its purity and cleanliness in spite of the surrounding filth. The dirty water of the pond does not stick to the petals of the lotus. Likewise, when the immaculate and completely pure and divine Supreme Being takes the form of Lord Ram who appears to be a human being, the latter form of the Lord retains all the purity and holiness that the Lord's cosmic form has. The physical gross form of the Lord is not tainted by any of the corruptions, evil characters and shortcomings that are a natural part of the gross world.

In other words, though Lord Ram lives in this gross world full of shortcomings and behaves in an ordinary fashion as if he were an ordinary man, though he walks on this earth on which evil and sinful other creatures walk, the Lord is not at all affected by anything gross and tainted; the Lord maintains his holiness, divinity and purity. Similarly, though the Lord sees so many sights of the material world, though he sees the gross world of material sense objects, he is not concerned with any of them, maintaining his complete aloofness and detachment from all temptations and allurements that an ordinary creature is attracted to by the virtue of his seeing them with his eyes. While an ordinary creature sees this artificial world which is so magnificent and life-like inspite of it being an illusion created by the conditioned mind that he takes it to be real and granted, arguing that if he can personally see it and witness it then it must be the truth, Lord Ram knows that it is an illusion. The Lord is not misled into believing that the world is true by the sights that he sees around him, but he can see behind this external misleading façade to understand the truth and reality. It means also that while it is easy to deceive the world by pretensions and creating external visuals of charm, it is impossible to cheat the Lord because he can see the truth and know the reality of any given situation.

Metaphysically this translates into being self-realised, wise and enlightened. The fact that the Lord's heart and mind are not affected or tainted in the least by the countless sins and evils that pervade this gross world inspite of his walking on it and seeing every sight in it is metaphorically depicted by comparing the Lord's feet and eyes with the Lotus flower.

Good virtues are always deemed 'beautiful', and bad ones are 'ugly'. This is the reason why "Lord Ram's lotus-like eyes are beautiful".

Similarly, inspite of walking on earth that is gross and unclean, inspite of living in the midst of gross material sense objects in this world, the Lord remains eternally detached from them. The Lord never uses his legs to go in that direction that is against the laws of Dharma, i.e. the laws as laid down by the scriptures. On the contrary, the Lord always treads the path of Dharma; he always goes in the direction that is righteous and noble; he always walks on the path that is righteous and noble. That is why his feet are compared to the "Lotus flower" which is always clean inspite of living in the dirty water of a pond.]

तिलकु ललित सर भ्रुकुटी काम कमानै ।
 श्रवन बिभूषन रुचिर देखि मन मानै ॥51॥
 नासा चिबुक कपोल अधर रद सुंदर ।
 बदन सरद बिधु निंदक सहज मनोहर ॥52॥

tilaku lalita sara bhrukuṭī kāma kamānai.
 śravana bibhūṣana rucira dēkhi mana mānai. 51.
 nāsā cibuka kapōla adhara rada sundara.
 badana sarada bidhu nindaka sahaja manōhara. 52.

51-52. The Tilak mark (which is a religious symbol marked on the forehead with a paste of sandalwood and saffron mixed with water) appears to be like an arrow mounted on the bow of Kamdeo-cupid which is represented by their (Ram and Laxman's) curved eyebrows. The mind and heart becomes delighted at the sight of the ornaments worn by them in their ears (the ear-rings). (51)

Their nose, chin, cheeks, lips and teeth are very beautiful to behold, while their faces—which put to shame the beauty of the full Moon of a winter night—are so enchanting that they virtually hold the beholder's mind and heart captive and enthralled by their inherent charm. (52)

[Note—These verses describe the beautiful imagery of Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman. Refer also to verse nos. 53-54 below.

The curved eyebrows are compared to the bow of Kamdeo who is the patron God of beauty, the Tilak Mark on the forehead is compared to the arrow because it is placed vertically just above the middle of the eyebrows like a mounted arrow on an actual bow.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244; (ii) Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

Refer also to: Geetawali—(i) Baal Kand, verse nos. 62; verse no. 63, stanza nos. 1-3; verse no. 73, stanza nos. 2-5; (ii) Uttar Kand, verse no. 10, stanza no. 4; verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.]

उर बिसाल बृष कंध सुभग भुज अतिबल ।
पीत बसन उपबीत कंठ मुकुता फल ॥53॥
कटि निषंग कर कमलन्हि धरें धनु-सायक ।
सकल अंग मन मोहन जोहन लायक ॥54॥

ura bisāla br̥ṣa kandha subhaga bhuja atibala.
pīta basana upabīta kaṇṭha mukutā phala. 53.
kaṭi niṣaṅga kara kamalanhi dharēṁ dhanu-sāyaka.
sakala aṅga mana mōhana jōhana lāyaka. 54.

53-54. They have a broad chest. Their shoulders are as magnificent and majestic as those of a bull, while their arms are very strong and sturdy. They wear Pitambars (yellow, seamless, silk, body wrapping cloth) and the sacred thread, while a necklace of pearls adorn their necks. (53)

They have a quiver tied to their waists, and hold a bow and arrow in their hands. In this manner, all their body parts are enchanting for the mind and heart, and are worth beholding. (54)

[Note—Refer note of verse nos. 51-52 above.

Lord Ram looked exceptionally handsome and charming. He had a well chiseled body with sharp attractive features. Anyone who saw him was simply swept off his or her feet by the mere beauty of the sight.]

राम-लखन-छबि देखि मगन भए पुरजन ।
उर आनंद जल लोचन प्रेम पुलक तन ॥55॥
नारि परस्पर कहहि देखि दोउ भाइन्ह ।
लहेउ जनम फल आजु जनमि जग आइन्ह ॥56॥

rāma-lakhana-chabi dēkhi magana bha'ē purajana.
ura ānanda jala lōcana prēma pulaka tana. 55.
nāri paraspara kahahim dēkhi dō'u bhā'inha.
lahē'u janama phala āju janami jaga ā'inha. 56.

55-56. Watching the majestic beauty of Sri Ram and Laxman, the citizens of the city (of Janakpur) became exhilarated. Their hearts were delighted, their eyes were filled with tears (of joy), and their bodies were thrilled with affection for the Lord. (55)

Looking at the two brothers, the womenfolk of the city consider themselves most fortunate. They tell each other enthusiastically—‘We have received the reward of taking birth in this world.’¹(56)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.

Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 73-79.]

जग जनमि लोयन लाहु पाए सकल सिवहि मनावहीं ।
बरु मिलौ सीतहि साँवरो हम हरषि मंगल गावहीं ।।
एक कहहिं कुँवरु किसोर कुलिस कठोर सिव धनु है महा ।
किमि लेहिं बाल मराल मंदर नृपहि अस काहुँ न कहा ।। 7 ।।

jaga janami lōyana lāhu pā'e sakala sivahi manāvahīm.
baru milau sītahi sāmvarō hama haraṣi maṅgala gāvahīm.
ēka kahahīm kumvaru kisōra kulisa kaṭhōra siva dhanu hai mahā.
kimi lēhīm bāla marāla mandara nṛpahi asa kāhum'na kahā. 7.

Chanda 7. [The mesmerised womenfolk of Janakpur thank their good luck that they are able to have a chance to watch Lord Ram and Laxman at so close a range and to their heart's content.]

‘After having taken birth in this world and being able to see it with our eyes for so long, it is for the first time now that we feel that our eyes have been fully rewarded for their ability to see. [In other words, we profusely thank our eyes that have enabled us to see the magnificent sight of the Lord in our midst. Otherwise, how could we see him? Now we also understand why our good luck had provided us with eyes that could see instead of eyes that would be blind. It is because of these eyes that we have been able to see this bewitching sight of the two brothers, Ram and Laxman. Now we realise that of all the sights that we have been seeing all along in our lives till now and believing them to be beautiful, none can ever hope to bear any resemblance to or be fit to be compared with the beauty and charm of this magnificent image of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman that stands right before our eyes today. Therefore, we consider ourselves exceedingly lucky and exceptionally privileged to have eyes that could see, that have made it possible for us to see the Lord, for otherwise we would have missed this golden chance of a lifetime.]’

All of them earnestly pray to Lord Shiva and invoke his blessings with the hope that Sita would get the dark-complexioned prince (i.e. Lord Ram) as her groom, and consequentially they would all can get an opportunity to sing songs of felicitations and joy that would mark such an auspicious occasion.

Some among the womenfolk wonder—‘The prince is still very young while Shiva's bow is hard as the Vajra (Indra's weapon, considered the hardest object in this creation). Say, why has no one dared and gathered courage to tell (advise or warn) Janak to consider how it was ever possible for the young ones of a Swan to be able to lift a huge mountain?’

[Here, Lord Ram is compared to a young Swan, and the bow to a heavy mountain. The womenfolk of Janakpur wonder how Ram would lift this heavy bow to qualify to marry Sita. They wonder why Janak is not marrying Sita to Ram directly, but insisting that she would be married to any person who lifts the heavy bow of Lord Shiva. Now that Lord Shiva has been invoked and requested by them that Ram be made the groom of Sita, it is certain to happen. But this would entail Ram lifting the heavy bow, something that seems difficult if not outright impossible. Can't someone tell Janak not to force Ram to lift the bow as a precondition of marrying Sita? How can this young and delicate prince lift an old and heavy bow which is like a young swan being tasked to lift a huge mountain?] (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249. The only difference is that here the citizens pray to the creator Brahma; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255; (iii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257 where Sita's mother expresses the same view as other womenfolk; and (iv) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Doha no. 258 where Sita is exceedingly worried and says almost the same thing as the other womenfolk.

Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 80-83.]

भे निरास सब भूप बिलोकत रामहि ।
पन परिहरि सिय देब जनक बरु स्यामहि ।।57।।
कहहिं एक भलि बात ब्याहु भल होइहि ।
बर दुलहिनि लागि जनक अपनपन खोइहि ।।58।।

bhē nirāsa saba bhūpa bilōkata rāmaḥi.
pana parihari siya dēba janaka baru syāmahi. 57.
kahahim ēka bhali bāta byāhu bhala hō'ihī.
bara dulahini lagi janaka apanapana khō'ihī. 58.

57-58. Looking at Sri Ram, all the assembled kings (who had gathered at the venue of the bow ceremony to try their luck by lifting the bow) lost all hopes of ever marrying Sita, and they speculated that now Janak would certainly marry Sita to the dark-complexioned groom by abandoning his stubbornness and revoking his declared vow (that only the person who lifts and strings the bow would be betrothed to Sita). (57)

Some of them assert that it is a good thing for it will be a grand marriage if Janak indeed sets aside his stern vows for the sake of the happiness of the groom and the bride (because it would be a perfect match). (58).

[Note—It is to be noted that the kings have already decided that Sri Ram is the groom by using the word 'Bar', meaning a groom, for him, and the word 'Dulhini' for Sita in the 2nd line of verse 58.

We must remember that the author is Tulsidas, and for him Lord Ram was indeed the eternal groom for Sita because Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Sita of goddess Laxmi who was the eternal consort of the Lord. It is absolutely unthinkable to imagine anyone else to be a groom for Sita.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 7; verse no. 90, stanza no. 1.

Refer also to verse no. 59-60 below.]

सुचि सुजान नृप कहहिं हमहि अस सूझई ।
तेज प्रताप रूप जहँ तहँ बल बूझई ।।59।।
चितइ न सकहु राम तन गाल बजावहु ।
बिधि बस बलउ लजान सुमति न लजावहु ।।60।।

suci sujāna nr̥pa kahahim hamahi asa sūjha'ī.
tēja pratāpa rūpa jaham̃ taham̃ bala būjha'ī. 59.
cita'i na sakahu rāma tana gāla bajāvahu.
bidhi basa bala'u lajāna sumati na lajāvahu. 60.

59-60. Those kings who were wise, practical, and dispassionate in their hearts, said, 'It appears to us that wherever there is glory, majesty, fame and beauty, the virtues of strength and valour are also present there.

[In the assembly of invited kings there were some who realised that Sita was too young for them, and Ram was a perfect match for her. So when they saw that other kings were getting restless and eager to grab the first chance to break the bow in order to marry Sita, these wise kings admonished and rebuked them. They remarked that the person, who is so charming and majestic to look at, a reference to Lord Ram, is also strong enough to lift the bow. They implied that none of the kings had the charm and majesty that Lord Ram had, and they aren't strong enough to lift Lord Shiva's bow. Therefore, why don't they sit down quietly instead of shuffling excitedly on their seats; why don't they come to their senses and avoid proving themselves impotent and lesser in strength by not attempting to lift the bow and making their incompetence and irrelevance evident?]' (59)

Look, you cannot lift your eyes even as much as to glimpse directly at Sri Ram¹ (because you feel shy and ashamed at yourself when you compare your own lack of strength, majesty, glamour and charm with that of Lord Ram, because you have developed an inferiority complex in the face of the glamour and majesty that Ram possesses, and because you have realised that none of you have the stature befitting of a groom suitable for Sita as much as that of Ram).

Then say, why do you unnecessarily boast²? It is due to destiny that your strength and valour has already been put to shame (refer verse no. 11). Now then, why do you put your wisdom and intellect also to shame and dishonour (by not being wise and intelligent enough to realise your limitations and ground realities, and boasting that you will break the bow and marry Sita when you know that you do not have the wherewithal to do so, and when you know that a suitable candidate in the form of Lord Ram has come, who is certain to find favour with Sita, her father and the rest of the people of Janakpur)?' (60).

[Note—See note of verse nos. 57-58.

¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 3 which says that the failed kings sat with bowed head in shame.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267. When the kings had failed to lift the bow and Lord Ram had successfully not only lifted it but also broke it into two halves as he bent the bow to string it, the frustrated kings smoked a conspiracy,

and they stood up in revolt. They created a ruckus and were itching for a fight, challenging that no one can marry the young girl as long as they are alive—a clear hint that a fierce battle was in the offing. It was then that some of the wise kings who had earlier advised them to refrain from attempting to lift the bow intervened and sternly rebuked them.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 95.]

अवसि राम के उठत सरासन टूटिहि ।
गवनहिं रामसमाज नाक अस फूटिहि ॥61॥
कस न पिअहु भरि लोचन रूप सुधा रसु ।
करहु कृतारथ जन्म होहु कत नर पसु ॥62॥

avasi rāma kē uṭhata sarāsana ṭūṭiḥi.
gavanahim rāmasamāja nāka asa phūṭiḥi. 61.
kasa na pi'ahu bhari lōcana rūpa sudhā rasu.
karahu kṛtāratha janma hōhu kata nara pasu. 62.

61-62. [Tulsidas says that—] It is absolutely certain that when Lord Ram gets up, the bow shall be broken, while the rest of the assembled kings and their retinue will have to go back home empty-handed, burdened by shame and ignominy, just like one has to leave a place when his nose is broken (and starts bleeding—a figure of speech implying shame, humiliation and dishonour)¹. (61)

[So, the good kings reproached the greedy kings by saying—] ‘Why don’t you fellows drink the nectar-like beauty (of Sri Ram) to your heart’s content? Make yourself feel contented and privileged by doing so² (because when it is certain that you fellows won’t marry Sita, then why not use this opportunity to enjoy the wonderful spectacle of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying Sita, as this chance will not come to you again in life; why do you wish to fritter it away out of your haughtiness and vanity?). Why do you want to become beastly and mean, and behave like an animal in the guise of a man?’

[That is, why don’t you enjoy the wonderful sight of Lord Ram looking so majestic and grand in the middle of the assembly? Have you ever seen such a lovely prince in your life? In his comparison all of you look like ugly animals. Your behaviour is also like a stupid and lustful animal that has no sense of propriety and wisdom because all of you yearn to marry Sita who is much younger in age than any of you, and none of you is a suitable match for her by any yardstick. Can’t you see the dilemma that Janak is in—put yourselves in his place and think what you would do. When Ram is present as a candidate, say which father would not like to marry his beloved daughter to him as compared to you all, none of whom is even like a dark shadow of this glorious prince. When it is dead certain that Sita will be married to Ram, what sense is there in inviting humiliation and shame by attempting to lift the bow, especially when it is Lord Shiva’s bow and the latter has already been invoked by the citizens as well as Sita to make things happen in a way that the bow breaks automatically at the hands of Ram, implying that it would not move a fraction no matter how hard you all try.

In this scenario, what sense is there in boasting that you have great strength? Why don’t you fill your hearts and eyes with the pleasant sight of Lord Ram who is like a lotus amongst other flowers in this pond representing the venue of the bow ceremony?] (62)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 245 along with preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-4; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 246; (c) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 251; (d) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 257.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 70, stanza no. 9; (b) verse no. 79, stanza nos. 2-3; (c) verse no. 80; (d) verse no. 82, stanza no. 1; (e) verse no. 85, stanza no. 1; and (f) verse no. 89, stanza nos. 4-6.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 266—to along with preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-4.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza nos. 8-9; verse no.

Refer also to Chanda no. 8 below.]

दुहु दिसि राजकुमार बिराजत मुनिबर।
नील पीत पाथोज बीच जनु दिनकर।।63।।
काकपच्छ रिषि परसत पानि सरोजनि।
लाल कमल जनु लालत बाल मनोजनि।।64।।

duhu disi rājakumāra birājata munibara.
nīla pīta pāthōja bīca janu dinakara. 63.
kākapaccha riṣi parasata pāni sarōjani.
lāla kamala janu lālata bāla manōjani. 64.

63-64. The two princes (Ram and Laxman) look magnificent on either side of the sage (Vishwamitra), and this view reminds one of the wonderful and enchanting sight of the sun when it is viewed at an angle in such a way that it has a blue-tinged and a yellow-tinged lotus flower on either side of it.

[In this imagery, Lord Ram is compared to the blue lotus because he has a dark complexion, Laxman to a yellow lotus as he has a fair complexion, and sage Vishwamitra to the sun as he is radiant with divine energy that he has accumulated by doing severe Tapa, effusing out of him.] (63)

The sage affectionately moves his hands on the curled lock of hairs dangling on the side of the ears of the two princes. This view is like the dark-red petals of a lotus flower caressing two young sons of Kamdeo-cupid.

[In this imagery, Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two most handsome sons of Kamdeo, the patron God of beauty, and the sage's hands are compared to the petals of the red lotus. The young ones of Kamdeo who are sitting near the lotus flower are being tenderly caressed by the petals as they sway in the soft wind.] (64).

[Note—Verse no. 63 refers to the sight of the rising sun that looks beautiful when it is viewed with a blue and a yellow tinged lotus flower held on either side of the line of vision. Verse no. 64 is another example of metaphor which Tulsidas has profusely made use of in his compositions. The red lotus is compared to sage Vishwamitra's hands, and the two infants of Kamdeo-cupid are likened to the faces of Sri Ram and Laxman. Kamdeo-cupid is considered the most attractive entity in the whole of creation.]

मनसिज मनोहर मधुर मूरति कस न सादर जोवहू।
बिनु काज राज समाज महुँ तजि लाज आपु बिगोवहू।।

सिष देइ भूपति साधु भूप अनूप छबि देखन लगे ।
रघुबंस कैरव चंद चितइ चकोर जिमि लोचन लगे ॥ 8 ॥

chanda:

manasija manōhara madhura mūrati kasa na sādara jōvahū.
binu kāja rāja samāja mahamū taji lāja āpu bigōvahū.
siṣa dē'i bhūpati sādhu bhūpa anūpa chabi dēkhana lagē.
raghubansa kairava canda cita'i cakōra jimi lōcana lagē. 8.

Chanda 8. [This Chanda continues with what has been said in verse no. 61-62 above.]

‘Oh, why don’t you respectfully and intently look at the sweet and enchanting image (of Lord Ram) that has the ability to captivate and enthrall even the heart of Kamdeo-cupid? All of you unnecessarily put yourselves to shame in the assembly of kings without any rhyme or reason.’¹

Having given this advice to the other kings, the saintly kings began to cheerfully look at the beautiful image (of Sri Ram and Laxman). They stared at the lotus-like face of the Moon of the Raghu’s clan (i.e. the beautiful face of Lord Ram) just like the bird Chakor looks at the full moon without blinking².

[‘Chakor’ is the Indian red-legged partridge. This bird is famed because it stares unblinkingly at the full moon as it is very much enchanted by the beauty of the full moon’s disc. The bird is cited when a poet wishes to draw a parallel with someone exceedingly enamoured of and in love with another person so much so that he stares at his beloved’s face unblinkingly, totally oblivious of his surroundings and circumstances.

In this stanza, Lord Ram and Laxman’s faces are like the full moon, and the saintly kings are like the numerous Chakor birds that fix their gazes on this moon. Lord Ram was born in the dynasty of great kings started by an ancient king by the name of Raghu who ruled from Ayodhya.] (Chanda no. 8)

[Note—¹Refer: Note of verse nos. 61-62 above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.]

पुर नर नारि निहारहिं रघुकुल दीपहि ।
दोषु नेहबस देहिं बिदेह महीपहि ॥ 65 ॥
एक कहहिं भल भूप देहु जनि दूषन ।
नृप न सोह बिनु बचन नाक बिनु भूषन ॥ 66 ॥

pura nara nāri nihārahiṁ raghukula dīpahi.
dōṣu nēhabasa dēhiṁ bidēha mahīpahi. 65.
ēka kahahiṁ bhala bhūpa dēhu jani dūṣana.
nrpa na sōha binu bacana nāka binu bhūṣana. 66.

65-66. The ladies and gentlemen of the city intently, unblinkingly and closely watch Sri Ram who is like a lamp of king Raghu’s clan. [That is, Lord Ram is the brightest son of this dynasty.] The citizens are so overwhelmed and moved with love and affection for the

Lord that they put the blame for the dilemma and uncertainties that have been created on king Videh (king Janak)¹.

[What was the uncertainty and dilemma? The king had vowed that anyone who lifts and strings the bow of Lord Shiva would marry Sita. But with Ram present in their midst, the citizens want him to be chosen as the groom for Sita. This is the dilemma and the quandary—the king will not go back on his vows, and therefore it is uncertain whether their wishes to see Sita married to Ram would be fulfilled.] (65)

Someone says, 'The king is very good and truthful; don't blame him. Look, a king who does not steadfastly adhere to his words or vows, and a woman who does not wear the basic ornament of the nose-pin or the nose-ring, do not look good and are not appreciated.'

[When some of the citizens began accusing king Janak of being stubborn in sticking to his vows of tying the marriage of Sita with the bow, and in the process putting her future at an uncertain stake, some wise amongst them defended the king. They said that the king is not at fault. When he had set the condition of the lifting of the formidable bow he was not aware of Lord Ram. And once the condition is set and declared openly, it would be absolutely unrighteous and unpardonable for any noble king to go back on his own words. So, though it is true that in the present instance this stern vow is acting as a spoil-sport, but one must not blame the king for this impasse. In fact, the king himself is in a dilemma; he himself regrets that he made this vow. But now it can't be helped.]² (66)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256; and (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 258.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 78, stanza no. 3; (b) verse no. 82, stanza no. 3; and (c) verse no. 86;

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 76, stanza no. 3; (b) verse no. 80; (c) verse no. 87, stanza nos. 2-4.]

हमरें जान जनेस बहुत भल कीन्हेउ ।
पन मिस लोचन लाहु सबन्धि कहँ दीन्हेउ ।।67।।
अस सुकृती नरनाहु जो मन अभिलाषिहि ।
सो पुरइहिं जगदीस परज पन राखिहि ।।68।।

hamarēṁ jāna janēsa bahuta bhala kīnhē'u.
pana misa lōcana lāhu sabanhi kham' dīnhē'u. 67.
asa sukṛtī naranāhu jō mana abhilāṣihi.
sō pura'ihim jagadīsa paraja pana rākhihi. 68.

67-68. [The citizens who had praised king Janak, continued—]

'In our opinion, the king has done a good thing of making the vow because it is due to it that our eyes have been rewarded with the opportunity to have this fruit (or reward in the form of the rare privilege of viewing Lord Ram and Laxman).

[If the king hadn't organized this ceremony and had married Sita to some prince of his choice, there would not have been an opportunity for sage Vishwamitra to bring Ram and Laxman here, and we all would have missed on this golden chance of our

lifetime. So, instead of accusing the king of being stern and tying the future of Sita to the bow we must rather thank him for giving us this chance of viewing Lord Ram at such close quarters.]¹ (67)

All the desires and wishes that such a virtuous, righteous, truthful and noble king makes in his heart are sure to be fulfilled by the Lord God, and the Lord shall uphold his (king's) vows, promises and words by ensuring that the desire of his heart is fulfilled.

[And what is the desire of the king? Well, the king himself is eager to see Ram as the groom. So he must also be praying to Lord Shiva to make things happen in such a way that Ram marries Sita and his vows are also upheld. Had the king known about Ram prior to making his vows, it is sure that he would not have done so and instead invited Ram directly to marry Sita.]² (68)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 76; (b) verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; (c) verse nos. 79—80; and (d) verse no. 81, stanza no. 2.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222.

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—verse no. 68, stanza nos. 6, 9; verse nos. 68, 79, 86—88.

In fact, verse no. 79 of Geetawali, Baal Kand expressly says that the citizens of Janakpur thanked Janak that he had arranged for the bow ceremony which led to Lord Ram coming to the city, thereby giving the people a golden opportunity of a lifetime, something they would have missed if this ceremony was not held. So they all thanked the king profusely.

Verse nos. 69-70 that follow below give an answer as to why it was impossible for the king to break his vows now and marry Sita with Ram.]

प्रथम सुनत जो राउ राम गुन—रूपहि ।
बोली ब्याहि सिय देत दोष नहिं भूपहि ॥69॥
अब करि पइज पंच महँ जो पन त्यागै ।
बिधि गति जानि न जाइ अजसु जग जागै ॥70॥

prathama sunata jō rā'u rāma guna-rūpahi.
bōli byāhi siya dēta dōṣa nahim bhūpahi. 69.
aba kari pa'ija pañca maham' jō pana tyāgai.
bidhi gati jāni na jā'i ajasu jaga jāgai. 70.

69-70. 'If the king had heard about the beauty and virtuous characters of Sri Ram prior to his making the vow, then he would have certainly invited him and would have betrothed Sita to him. No one would have found any fault with the king then. [Refer verse no. 68 above, and verse nos. 73-74 below.] (69)

But now having once made a particular vow and then breaking it in front of the 'Panchas'—literally meaning 'five witnesses' but here implying the whole assembly, the king is bound to invite an extremely bad name and infamy as a king who tells lies, is selfish and unrighteous. This infamy will spread across the world like wild-fire, and it is something most incongruous to even imagine and think of for such a noble king as Janak¹. (70)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 252 in which king Janak has himself explicitly reiterated this point.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 2 in which Sita too fears immense ignominy if her father breaks the vow he has already declared.]

अजहुँ अवसि रघुनंदन चाप चढ़ाउब ।
 ब्याह उछाह सुमंगल त्रिभुवन गाउब ॥71॥
 लागि झरोखन्ह झाँकहिं भूपति भामिनि ।
 कहत बचन रद लसहिं दमक जनु दामिनि ॥72॥

ajahum' avasi raghunandana cāpa caṛhā'uba.
 byāha uchāha sumaṅgala tribhuvana gā'uba. 71.
 lāgi jharōkhanha jhām'kahim bhūpati bhāmini.
 kahata bacana rada lasahim damaka janu dāmini. 72.

71-72. 'Indeed, even now it is sure that Raghunandan (Sri Ram) shall lift and string the bow, and the whole of the three worlds shall sing felicitous songs on the occasion of his marriage ceremony (with Sita).' [The phrase 'three world' means the entire world. In classical literature, the world is divided into three segments—viz. the heaven, the earth, and the subterranean world.] (71)

Presently, the royal womenfolk are watching from the palace balconies and windows, and when they talk, their teeth shine and dazzle like electric. (72)

[Note—The assembly has gathered at the venue, and a lot of debate is underway as to who will lift the bow and marry Sita. The royal ladies are enthralled by the beauty of Lord Ram, and they lean out of palace balconies and windows to gaze at the Lord. This scene reminds one of Ram Charit Manas where it is described how the womenfolk of Janakpur had poured out of their homes and peered out of their balconies and windows to look at Lord Ram and Laxman as they wondered in the city of Janakpur on a sight-seeing visit. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220 in particular, and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223 in general.]

जनु दमक दामिनि रूप रति मद निदरि सुंदरि सोहहीं ।
 मुनि ढिग देखाए सखिन्ह कुँवर बिलोकि छबि मन मोहहीं ॥
 सिय मातु हरषी निरखि सुषमा अति अलौकिक रामकी ।
 हिय कहति कहँ धनु कुँअर कहँ बिपरीत गति बिधि बाम की ॥9॥

janu damaka dāmini rūpa rati mada nidari sundari sōhahīm.
 muni ḍhiga dēkhā'ē sakhinha kum'vara bilōki chabi mana mōhahīm.
 siya mātu haraṣī nirakhi suṣamā ati alaukika rāmakī.
 hiya kahati kaham' dhanu kum'ara kaham' biparīta gati bidhi bāma kī. 9.

Chanda 9. Their (the women companions of the queen-mother) teeth resemble the dazzle of lightening. The beautiful woman are looking adorable, and their charm, beauty and magnificence appears to put to shame the pride and haughtiness of Rati, the consort of Kamdeo, as being the most beautiful lady in existence.

The companions of the queen (the mother of Sita) pointed out to her the two princes who were seated near the sage (Vishwamitra). At this magnificent sight, the queen's heart and mind were enthralled, and she was enamoured by the wonderful view

of the two young princes whose sight presented a most bewitching and captivating image. The mother of Sita (named Sunaina) felt glad and most delighted when she looked at this magnificent view of the Lord's stupendous beauty.

She was on the horns of a formidable dilemma, worried about the fate of her daughter. She thought, 'On the one hand is the old and creaky bow, and on the other hand is this wonderful prince! The ways of the creator are often-times antagonist to the desires of the heart, as they sometimes create a situation where nonsense can't be avoided*.'

[This has reference to the nonsense of tying the fate of Sita with an old decrepit bow when a fully eligible candidate is standing right in front to become her groom. The creator had destined in the fate of Sita that her marriage would be hinged on a bow, but when the creator was writing her destiny he did not realise that things might be different on the ground when the time comes for the actual marriage, and so he did not make provisions for it. Therefore, Ram will have to break the bow if he has to marry Sita, and this bow is rusty, old and stubbornly hard. Say, how ridiculous it is to hinge the life of a girl on such lifeless object as the bow? But what can be done if this is her destiny decided by the thoughtless creator?

All these thoughts were swirling in the mind of Sita's mother as she watched Lord Ram and then looked at the bow lying on the elevated and decorated platform.] (Chanda no. 9)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256.

Also, to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 81-83.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 in which Sita's mother laments "the ways of the creator are so quirky that one cannot know what will happen now".]

कहि प्रिय बचन सखिन्ह सन रानि बिसूरति ।
कहाँ कठिन सिव धनुष कहाँ मृदु मूरति ॥ 73 ॥
जौं बिधि लोचन अतिथि करत नहिं रामहि ।
तौ कोउ नृपहि न देत दोषु परिनामहि ॥ 74 ॥

kahi priya bacana sakhinha sana rāni bisūratī.
kahām̐ kaṭhina siva dhanuṣa kahām̐ mṛdu mūrati. 73.
jaur̐ bidhi lōcana atithi karata nahir̐ rāmahi.
tau kō'u nṛpahi na dēta dōṣu parināmahi. 74.

73-74. Saying pleasant words to her women friends, the queen became pensive and began to ponder, 'Why, there is this (hard and stern) bow of Lord Shiva on the one hand, and this tender, soft and delicate form (of Lord Ram) on the other hand. There is no match between the two. [There is no comparison between the delicate and tender body of Lord Ram with the rusty, creaky, old and stubborn gross form of a lifeless bow on which hinges the future of my daughter Sita. How ridiculous and incongruous it is. Say, why can't something be done which would prevent hinging Sita's future with this rusty and ugly bow, and instead link it to Lord Ram's lively and charming form?] (73)

If the creator had not created a situation where Lord Ram has come to visit us as our guest of honour, no one would have seen him, and no one would have then blamed king Janak for making a nonsense vow and putting the entire future of Sita on the wager.

[Sita's mother means that had Lord Ram not come visiting them, no one would have ever known that such a wonderful prince lived who should be married to Sita. In the absence of this knowledge, it would have been alright to choose a strong and powerful groom for Sita by testing his strength and prowess on the condition of lifting of the bow, as the king would have been justified to select a strong prince as his son-in-law. But the ground reality now is different. Now that we have Lord Ram in our midst, it is absurd to think of any other prince to be a groom for Sita.

But what is to be done now? The king has already declared that anyone who lifts and strings the bow will marry Sita, and being a king known to be truthful to his words it is unimaginable now that he would go back on his own vows. It is such a quagmire-like situation. Now everyone wants that Sita be betrothed to Lord Ram, and Janak's vow is becoming a thorn that prevents the fulfillment of this unanimous desire of the citizens. So everyone has started blaming the king of acting stubbornly and impractically. But say, what can the king do?

Had he known about Ram, he would not have held the bow ceremony at all, but would have rather invited this prince directly to accept the hands of Sita in marriage.]’ (74)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

Also, to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 79, 81-83.

Refer also to verse nos. 65-70 above, especially verse no. 69.]

अब असमंजस भयउ न कछु कहि आवै ।
रानिहि जानि ससोच सखी समझावै ॥75॥
देबि सोच परिहरिय हरष हियँ आनिय ।
चाप चढ़ाउब राम बचन फुर मानिय ॥76॥

aba asamanjasa bhaya'u na kachu kahi āvai.
rānihi jāni sasōca sakhī samajhāvai. 75.
dēbi sōca parihariya haraṣa hiyaṁ āniya.
cāpa caṛhā'uba rāma bacana phura māniya. 76.

75-76. The queen was in a quandary, saying—‘Now there is an immense dilemma, and everything is highly uncertain. Nothing can be said for sure’¹.

Seeing that the queen was immersed in deep thought (and on the horns of a dilemma), her companions tried to reassure her, saying (75)—‘Oh noble lady! Stop worrying. Be delighted at heart. Take this word as the truth that the bow will be lifted and strung by Sri Ram only (and by no one else).’² (76)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 in which Sita's mother laments “the ways of the creator are so quirky that one cannot know what will happen now”.

Her consternations however are made evident in a general way in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256.

The creator however has been praised for having created such a magnificent form of Lord Ram as well as that of Sita with a view that they would be brought together to complement each other at some future time, and this 'time' has arrived, and therefore there is no worry. It is certain that Sita would be married with Ram—refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 77; and verse no. 79, stanza no. 3.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 the creator has been praised by the citizens of Janakpur for having created a situation whereby it was made possible for them to see Lord Ram in their midst at such a close quarter, something that would be unimaginable for them otherwise. Refer also to Chanda no. 9 above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 223, the womenfolk of Janakpur assure each other by saying—"Look friend. Some people say that they (Ram and Laxman) have great glory and immense potentials though they look ordinary and humble. Will that Lord who had liberated Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, from her curse which had turned her into a stone by the mere touch of the dust of his holy foot, thereby obliging her forever and making her full of gratitude for him, not break the bow of Shiva (to liberate Sita from her woes, agony, consternations and fears of an uncertain future)? Have a heart; it is certain to happen."

Also, in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 81, Sita's mother is assured by the wife of the royal priest that it is Lord Ram who will certainly break the bow, and so she must stop worrying.]

तीनि काल को ग्यान कौसिकहि करतल ।
 सो कि स्वयंबर आनिहिं बालक बिनु बल ॥ 77 ॥
 मुनि महिमा सुनि रानिहि धीरजु आयउ ।
 तब सुबाहु सूदन जसु सखिन्ह सुनायउ ॥ 78 ॥

tīni kāla kō gyāna kausikahi karatala.
 sō ki svayambara ānihiṁ bālaka binu bala. 77.
 muni mahimā suni rānihi dhīraju āya'u.
 taba subāhu sūdana jasū sakhinha sunāya'u. 78.

77-78. [The companions of the queen mother comforted and reassured her that she need not worry about whether or not Lord Ram would be able to break the bow and marry Sita. They gave the following logic to prove their point—]

'Sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) has knowledge of what happens in all the three periods of time (past, present, future). [The sage possessed mystical powers that enabled him to know all happenings, whether they happened in the past or in the near and far future. Nothing is hidden from him.]

Therefore, would he ever have brought these two boys to the Swayambar alongside him if he was not sure that there was going to be a positive outcome of the visit?

[Definitely no; the sage wouldn't have come here with Ram and Laxman if he hadn't known that some great news of grand success is in store for them, as it would be very insulting and demeaning for the sage and his reputation for not being able to reward the two princes adequately for protecting his fire sacrifice. Keeping mum by shying away

from participating in an open competition is tantamount to accepting a silent defeat. How can such a great and renowned sage as Vishwamitra ever let that happen, especially when he was the one who had begged king Dasrath to lend him the two princes inspite of the king's stiff opposition to his requests?

This was the opportunity for Vishwamitra to prove to the world why he had selected Ram and Laxman out of the countless kings and princes of the time to protect his fire sacrifice by making Ram accomplish a feat which no other king or prince would be able to achieve—and it was to lift the bow which no one else could as much as move for a fraction of an inch. This would give the sage the rare opportunity to say thanks to king Dasrath as well as to his two sons, Ram and Laxman—as this success will establish the glory and fame of the two brothers once and for all.

The uniqueness of this opportunity was that all the great and famed kings and princes of the time had assembled at one place, and when Ram would successfully lift, string and break the sturdy bow which all of them singly as well as together could not move a bit, it would certainly establish Lord Ram's glory in an unequivocal and irrefutable terms. What greater reward would a prince want, and what greater pride his father would have? If sage Vishwamitra was not sure that this will actually happen, it is definite he wouldn't have brought Ram and Laxman to the bow ceremony.

If Ram and Laxman went empty-handed from Janakpur without as much as being given a chance to try their hand at a competition where all the great kings and princes had assembled, and after doing so not being successful in it, would the sage not feel ashamed of himself that he did not adequately reward them for protecting his fire sacrifice? Should this happen it would be a great ignominy for the great sage who was famed world-wide as the one who possessed immense mystical powers and who could give boons. Would he not become a stock of laughter and ridicule in the world if he sat quietly watching and not enabling Ram to lift the bow when other kings had failed, because it would be equivalent to accepting his weakness and lack of mystical powers that he could not make Ram confident enough to successfully lift the bow?

The sage had been given a prominent seat, and imagine his shame if he would sit with a bowed head when king Janak started rebuking the kings and princes for their failure at lifting the bow. It will be accepting an obvious defeat by the sage if he did not stand up at that moment and order Ram to lift the bow; it would be a moral defeat for the sage, something that is unbelievable and unlikely to happen under any circumstance.

At the time of king Dasrath's reluctance of sending Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage, his court priest, sage Vasishtha, had explained to him that a great reward was in store for the two princes if they went along with Vishwamitra, that their fame is poised to spread far and wide if they obliged Vishwamitra by protecting his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. Say, what bigger reward a teenaged prince can be given than his fame and glory as the most handsome prince who possessed matchless valour, prowess, strength and confidence be established in the presence of all the great kings and princes of the time in a manner that did not involve any physical duel, battle or bloodshed, and which had the additional trophy of getting the hands of the most beautiful princess of the time in marriage?

Therefore, the very fact that the great sage Vishwamitra had brought the two princes to Janakpur to attend the bow ceremony means that they will win this competition. And this implies that all the other kings and princes would lose it.

The sage is well aware of Sri Ram's potentials, prowess and strength. Otherwise he wouldn't have brought them here because he knew the qualities of the bow and the stern vows which the king had made. He wouldn't have done anything to ridicule himself as well as Lord Sri Ram.

Hence, there is nothing to worry—as it sure that the bow will be lifted and strung by the Lord, and that Sita would be betrothed to him.]’ (77)

Hearing the fame and potent of the sage, the queen (mother of Sita) felt reassured. Then the friends told her the episode of Subahu's slaying at the hands of Sri Ram¹. (78)

[Note—¹The demon Subahu was killed by Lord Ram using a fire-tipped arrow when the former came to defile sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 83, stanza no. 2.]

सुनि जिय भयउ भरोस रानि हिय हरषइ ।
बहुरि निरखि रघुबरहि प्रेम मन करषइ ॥79॥
नृप रानी पुर लोग राम तन चितवहिं ।
मंजु मनोरथ कलस भरहिं अरु रितवहिं ॥80॥

sunī jiya bhaya'u bharōsa rāni hiya haraṣa'i.
bahuri nirakhi raghubarahi prēma mana karaṣa'i. 79.
nrpa rānī pura lōga rāma tana citavahim.
manjū manōratha kalasa bharahim aru ritavahim. 80.

79-80. Hearing it, the queen's heart found great solace and succour, and she felt delighted. Then she glanced once again at Sri Ram, and her heart and mind were thrilled. A surge of affectionate emotions flowed through her body. (79).

Presently, the king, the queen and the citizens are all intently watching Lord Sri Ram¹. Their mood swings between joy and melancholy, between hope and dismay as they are virtually swaying like a pendulum between the two extreme emotions of hope and expectation at one end, and despair and helplessness on the other end. [Once they are sure that Ram and Sita would be married, and then suddenly begin to doubt when they recollect the vow of king Janak which has tied the fate of Sita to the bow.]

It is like them repeatedly filling and then emptying a symbolic pitcher of hope and desire, at one moment expecting some auspicious turn of events and some sort of miracle to happen that fills them with joy and excitement, and at another moment losing hope and feeling dejected, melancholic and remorseful.

[In other words, once they feel that it is sure that Ram will break the bow and marry Sita, and then become sullen and gloomy at the thought that this appears unlikely in the situation where so many valiant kings and princes are vying with each other to lift the bow. Even if some of them fail, some other will be successful. And in this eventuality there is no hope ever of Ram being given a chance to lift and string the bow. This made them swing wildly between the emotions of hope and despair.]² (80)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 that says exactly the same thing.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249 where the citizens are confused; (b) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 where Sita's mother is filled with consternation; (c) Chaupai line

no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—Doha no. 258 where Sita herself is widely swaying between hope and desperation.

Refer also to Chanda no. 10 below.]

रितवहिं भरहिं धनु निरखि छिनु—छिनु निरखि रामहि सोचहिं ।
नर नारि हरष बिषाद बस हिय सकल सिवहिं सकोचहिं ॥
तब जनक आयसु पाइ कुलगुर जानकिहि लै आयऊ ।
सिय रूप रासि निहारि लोचन लाहु लोगन्हि पायऊ ॥10॥

chanda:

ritavahim bharahim dhanu nirakhi chinu-chinu nirakhi rāmahī sōcahīm.
nara nāri haraṣa biṣāda basa hiya sakala sivahim sakōcahīm.
taba janaka āyasu pā'i kulagura jānakihi lai āya'ū.
siya rūpa rāsi nihāri lōcana lāhu lōganhi pāya'ū. 10.

Chanda 10. While glancing at the bow, they (citizens and the queen) fill and empty the symbolic pitcher of hope and expectations every now and then. They glance at Sri Ram and then despair in their hearts (that he will not get a chance to marry Sita because the nasty old bow is standing as an obstacle)¹.

All the men and womenfolk are moved by hope and delight on the one hand, and overcome with gloom and melancholy on the other hand. This virtually embarrasses Lord Shiva (because it is his bow that has become an instrument that causes so much agony and uncertainties for the citizens of Janakpur, and has been the cause of so much pain and anxiety for Sita as well as her mother).

[Lord Shiva is a great devotee of Lord Ram, and therefore he cannot do anything that harms the interest of his Lord, i.e. Lord Ram. Therefore Lord Shiva has already made up his mind that he will make it sure that none of the other kings and princes be able to lift the bow, and that it will become extremely light and fragile as soon as Ram touches it. So Lord Shiva wonders as to why these people are still so worried and anxious? It appears that the people are accusing him of not being favourable and causing them so much agony inspite of his decision to ensure victory for Ram. This is why Shiva is feeling embarrassed.]

Then, on the orders of Janak, the royal Guru named Shatanand brought Janki (Sita) to the venue. At that time, all those assembled got the reward of their eyes by beholding Sita who was a treasury of beauty and charm². (Chanda no. 10)

[Note—¹Refer: Verse no. 80 above.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 246—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 248.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 6.

(iii) Verse nos. 81-82 below.]

मंगल भूषन बसन मंजु तन सोहहिं ।
देखि मूढ़ महिपाल मोह बस मोहहिं ॥81॥
रूप रासि जेहि ओर सुभायँ निहारइ ।

नील कमल सर श्रेणि मयन जनु डारइ ।।82 ।।

maṅgala bhūṣana basana maṅju tana sōhahim.
dēkhi mūrha mahipāla mōha basa mōhahim. 81.
rūpa rāsi jēhi ōra subhāyam' nihāra'i.
nīla kamala sara śrēni mayana janu ḍāra'i. 82.

81-82. Sita's charming body is adorned with auspicious clothes and precious ornaments befitting the occasion. Seeing her, the foolish kings in the assembly became extremely enchanted by her beauty, and were overcome with passion and delusions.

[The deluded kings thought that Sita was an ordinary princess, and that she is within reach now as it would be very easy to break the old and creaky bow and grab her hands in marriage. They did not know that Sita was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, and that Lord Vishnu, Laxmi's eternal husband, is in their midst in the form of Lord Ram. They are said to be 'deluded' because the wise kings among them had already advised them that Lord Ram is the Father of the entire creation as he is the Supreme Being in a human form, and that Sita is the cosmic Mother being a personified form of Jagdamba, the Mother Goddess.]¹ (81)

In whatever direction Sita—who is a treasury of beauty and charm—glances in a natural way, it appears that Kamdeo-cupid showers a hail of arrows made of blue lotus in that direction.

[In other words, wherever Sita glances, all those who are sitting in that direction become thrilled and enamoured of her beauty. If her roving eyes fall even casually upon a king or prince, he gets excited and believes that she like him. In their enthusiasm the assembled kings and princes forget that it is but natural for Sita to see the assembly in a causal manner by looking in every direction, and it is but a mere chance that their eyes meet. But this does not mean that Sita like him or is enchanted by him. But they are so overcome with delusions and passions that they think that Sita had purposely seen him.]² (82).

[Note—Refer: ¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 246; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 247.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 248; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 257.]

छिनु सीतहि छिनु रामहि पुरजन देखहि ।
रूप सील बय बंस बिसेष बिसेषहि ।।83 ।।
राम दीख जब सीय सीय रघुनायक ।
दोउ तन तकि तकि मयन सुधारत सायक ।।84 ।।

chinu sītahi chinu rāmaḥi purajana dēkhahim.
rūpa sīla baya bansa bisēṣa bisēṣahim. 83.
rāma dīkha jaba sīya sīya raghunāyaka.
dō'u tana taki taki mayana sudhārata sāyaka. 84.

83-84. The citizens of the city glance at Sri Ram for one moment and at Sita the other moment. They laud their respective elegance, beauty, characters, demeanours and age, as well as the fame and glory of their respective clans.¹ (83)

When Lord Ram saw Sita and she saw him, it appeared that Kamdeo-cupid repeatedly glanced at them and began to ready his arrows (to shoot)². (84)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 249; (b) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 228—to Doha no. 234 which describe how Lord Ram and Sita were enamoured of each other when the Lord had gone to the royal garden to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra's prayers and had met Sita there. She had come to offer prayers to goddess Parvati to bless her with a groom suitable for her; (b) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 248 where Sita fixes her glance upon Ram in the venue of the bow ceremony; and (c) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259 where the condition of Sita is described when Lord Ram is urged by sage Vishwamitra to go and lift the bow and the Lord approaches it with a majestic gait.]

प्रेम प्रमोद परस्पर प्रगटत गोपहिं ।
जनु हिरदय गुन ग्राम थूनि थिर रोपहिं ।। 85 ।।
राम सीय बय समौ सुभाय सुहावन ।
नृप जोबन छबि पुरइ चहत जनु आवन ।। 86 ।।

prēma pramōda paraspara pragaṭata gōpahim.
janu hiradaya guna grāma thūni thira rōpahim. 85.
rāma sīya baya samau subhāya suhāvana.
nrpa jōbana chabi pura'i cahata janu āvana. 86.

85-86. Both of them (Sri Ram and Sita) try to conceal their joy and their sense of mutual love and affection for each other though it was very apparent by their external demeanours. It appears that they are silently trying to gauge each other's virtues and firmly establish them like strong pillars of mutual trust and affection in their hearts.¹ (85)

The age of Sri Ram and Sita are right and suitable for the occasion. [That is, both of them are of the right age for marriage.] It appears that a king symbolising youth (represented by Lord Ram) wishes to enter a city of beauty, charm and glamour (represented by Sita).² (86)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 230 that describe the enchantment of Lord Ram at the sight of Sita in the royal gardens; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 232 of Sita's enchantment with Ram. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza nos. 3-4 also.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 230.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza nos. 2-4.]

The breaking of the Bow

On the D-day when the bow lifting and breaking ceremony was to be held, all the invited kings and princes as well as the citizens of Janakpur assembled at the venue. King Janak invited sage Vishwamitra along with Lord Ram and Laxman and gave him a distinct seat of honour which was separate from the general seating arrangement for all the other invited kings and was at an elevated platform like the one that is usually reserved for some especially highly placed guest of honour¹.

King Janak then called his ministers and royal heralds who declared the vow of the king and the reason why the assembly has been called. They declared that anyone who lifts and breaks the bow of Lord Shiva will marry Sita².

Now, in the assembly there were all sorts of kings and princes. Some were wise and intelligent who could judge the situation and decided to refrain from attempting to lift the bow. There are some obvious reasons for this. For one, they had already heard that the entire city favoured Ram as the would-be groom³.

Second, when they saw that two wonderful and handsome young princes of the correct age were present in their midst, and instead of being seated along with the rest of the invited kings and princes they were given a high seat of honour to sit upon, and the fact that they were accompanied by a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra, they made an intelligent deduction—that Janak had invited the rest of the kings as a mere formality, perhaps just to witness the ceremony, and that he had already made up his mind that the groom would be Ram or Laxman⁴.

This logic was bolstered because they thought that Janak had invited Vishwamitra to accompany Ram and Laxman to make sure that no one resisted or objected because the whole world knew the mighty sage and his immense mystical powers and would never ever dare to stand against the orders of Vishwamitra and invite his wrath. So the wise amongst the assembly decided to keep quiet. In fact, they even tried their best to dissuade others from being reckless and foolhardy, but the less wise kings and princes would not listen to them⁵.

These wise and good kings also realised that Sita was of too tender an age for them, and that it would look extremely odd and improper to even attempt to marry a girl who was so young in age as compared to them.

But, at the same time, there were also highly haughty and stupid kings in the gathering who did not want to accept defeat without trying, though it was certain that they would fail and that failure would mean utter humiliation and ignominy for them. So they got up with immense zeal and energy, went to the bow, tried their might against it, and being unable to move it even a fraction of an inch, returned to their seats with a long face and lowered head in shame and dishonour⁶.

These stupid kings had not realised that the situation was not in their favour, and they hadn't judged the mood of the people who were overwhelmingly in favour of Ram marrying Sita by lifting the bow. The invited kings must have known this because their retinue included their own spies who must have reported to them the happenings of the previous day when Ram and Laxman had gone for sight-seeing in Janakpur and the citizens had overwhelmingly favoured them as the would-be groom for Sita. The people had also prayed fervently to Lord Shiva to turn the events in favour of Ram because the bow belonged to him (Shiva), and if he decides in favour of Ram than no power on earth could make the bow move except Ram.⁷

Besides these two types of kings, there was a third category—those who either went to the bow, examined it carefully, and realizing that it was too much for them they returned to their seats even without attempting to lift it, or those who were so impotent that they simply squirmed sheepishly in their seats, not even mustering enough guts to stand up and show their face in the assembly⁸.

When none of the assembled kings and princes could as much as move the bow even a fraction of a millimeter, king Janak was extremely exasperated, dismayed and frustrated as he was very worried about the future of his daughter Sita. He sternly rebuked the kings and went to the extent of calling them impotent. He beemoaned their lack of strength, valour and ardour, and angrily declared that had he known that the earth has no strong person on its surface he would not have organized the ceremony and invited such dysfunctional persons to make himself an object of mockery in this world.⁹

Janak made some scathing disparaging remarks against *all* the kings¹⁰. This enraged Laxman, the brother of Lord Ram as it implied that the Lord was also impotent and lacked strength. So Laxman got up and vented his anger in public, challenging Janak to take his words, but Lord Ram politely calmed him down.¹¹

Then sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to fulfill the wish of Janak and remove his dilemma and consternations¹², whereupon Lord Ram went and lifted the bow, and then broke it into two halves in a thunderous roar¹³.

As soon as the bow broke, there was uproar of jubilation everywhere, on the land as well as in the sky, both of which erupted in joy and ecstasy¹⁴.

All these events are covered in Janki Mangal, from verse no. 87—to verse no. 114.

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 239 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 2—where Janak has sent his royal priest to bring Vishwamitra along with the two brothers to the venue.

In (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 244, and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 3 it is said that a special high seat that was superior to others was given by the king to the sage, along with Ram and Laxman to sit upon.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 7; verse no. 89, stanza nos. 1-3.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 223; Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 70, 73-80.

⁴Refer—Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 66, stanza no. 3 which gives a direct hint of this conclusion by Janak.

⁵Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 64-65, verse no. 68, stanza no. 9; verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; and verse no. 86 which is very explicit in expressing Janak's inner wish to marry Sita with Ram; (iii) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 15.

⁶Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 4-5.

⁷Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; again in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 80, stanza no. 6;

verse no. 81; verse no. 82, stanza no. 3; verse no. 84, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 85, stanza no. 1; verse no. 89, stanza no. 10.

⁸Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8.

⁹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 292; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 5-7.

¹⁰Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 252. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 89, stanza nos. 6-7.

¹¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 3; verse no. 89, stanza nos. 7-9.

¹²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4; verse no. 89, stanza no. 11.

¹³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 254; from Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; Doha no. 292 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-5. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza nos. 6-7; verse no. 91, stanza nos. 3-4; verse no. 92; verse no. 93, stanza nos. 1-2. (iii) Kavitaawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 10-11.

¹⁴Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 3; verse no. 94.]

सो छबि जाइ न बरनि देखि मनु मानै ।
सुधा पान करि मूक कि स्वाद बखानै ।। 87 ।।
तब बिदेह पन बंदिन्ह प्रगट सुनायउ ।
उठे भूप आमरषि सगुन नहिं पायउ ।। 88 ।।

sō chabi jā'i na barani dēkhi manu mānai.
sudhā pāna kari mūka ki svāda bakhānai. 87.
taba bidēha pana bandinha pragaṭa sunāya'u.
uṭhē bhūpa āmaraṣi saguna nahim pāya'u. 88.

87-88. It is not possible to describe that majestic and glorious scene (when the actual competition of lifting, stringing and breaking of the bow started). It was a very awe-inspiring, challenging and wonderful event, giving immense thrill, joy and delight to all those who witnessed it. Can a dumb man ever describe the taste of nectar after he has drunk it?

[Here, Tulsidas compares those who witnessed that scene with a dumb man who cannot ever describe how tasty the food was or how much he enjoyed it. Similarly, those who witnessed that event were unable to narrate its grandeur and charm. Tulsidas, who had been visualizing the entire event unfolding in the canvas of his mind, too is unable to fully describe it in words, for words have their own limitations and they cannot do justice to the feeling of joy and exhilaration that bubbled over when the citizens actually witnessed the event when Lord Ram had finally lifted and broken the bow to marry Sita, something they had so much wished to happen and dreamt of.] (87)

Then the royal heralds declared the vows made by Videh (king Janak). Hearing it, the assembled kings got up with great enthusiasm and zeal, each wanting to be the first to lift the bow, but there were no good and auspicious signs or omens to encourage them. (88)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.
(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84.
(iii) Kavitaawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 8-9.]

नहि सगुन पायउ रहे मिसु करि एक धनु देखन गए ।
टकटोरि कपि ज्यों नारियरु, सिरु नाइ सब बैठत भए ॥
एक करहिं दाप, न चाप सज्जन बचन जिमि टारें टरै ।
नृप नहुष ज्यों सब कें बिलोकत बुद्धि बल बरबस हरै ॥११॥

chanda:

nahi saguna pāya'u rahē misu kari ēka dhanu dēkhana ga'ē.
ṭakaṭōri kapi jyauṁ nāriyaru, siru nā'i saba baiṭhata bha'ē.
ēka karahim dāpa, na cāpa sajjana bacana jimi ṭārēm ṭarai.
nrpa nahuṣa jyōm saba kēm bilōkata bud'dhi bala barabasa harai. 11.

Chanda 11. When the kings did not find any encouraging and auspicious sign, they made some excuse to save their faces and sat down in humiliation¹.

Some of them went near the bow to see it, touched and felt it but did not attempt to lift it, leaving it alone just like a monkey who feels the outer shell of a coconut and leaves it aside (because it knows that it is impossible for it to break the shell and reach for the delicious kernel inside it). Then they came back and sat down on their seats with a bowed head. [It ought to be noted here that these kings have been ridiculed by comparing them to a 'monkey'! This is because they were greedy and wanted to see the bow at close quarters to judge whether they can manage to lift it, but finding it beyond their means they returned with a monkey-like red face.]

Some of them came to the bow very enthusiastically, and tried their might against it with full zeal and energy, but the bow did not relent and it did not yield any ground to them, remaining as unmoving as ever just like a good and righteous man remains unmoving and steadfast in upholding his truthful words. In this way, their vanity and pretensions of strength and powers was trounced, making them look lusterless, impotent and wasted, with their energy and enthusiasm dissipated and intelligence turned around its head to make them look utterly stupid and ridiculous².

The entire event reminded the observers of the story of king Nahush³. (Chanda no. 11)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8 which endorses this view that the assembled kings shifted uncomfortably and squirmed in their seats, bent their heads low in shame and doubt as they did not have the confidence and guts to stand up and walk up to the bow only to face humiliation as they felt that they have no chance of lifting it and winning the competition.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 251, and Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 252 say “the king could not move the bow by a fraction of a millimeter, and thus humiliated and trounced by it they returned to their seats with bent heads in shame and dejection.”

The messengers of Janak who had gone to Ayodhya to invite king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, to come with the marriage party to attend the marriage ceremony at Janakpur also reiterated this fact that none of the assembled kings and princes could as much as move the mighty bow a fraction of a millimeter—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 9 says “the kings bent their heads low in shame when they heard the challenge pronounced by the royal heralds of king Janak.”

The fact that they could not move the bow a bit is explicitly said in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 3-4, 7.

(iii) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 10.

³King *Nahush* had gained the stature of Indra by his virtuous deeds. He expressed his desire to establish conjugal relationship with Indra’s wife Indrani. When he received her intimation of consent, he yoked sages and hermits to his shoulder-mounted carriage (i.e. a palanquin) to go to her. He did not even give a second thought to such a reprehensible act in his pride and haughtiness. At last, he became a python due to the curse of sage Agastya. This incident is cited here to indicate that these kings had a false sense of pride in their strength, powers and abilities. Though the signs were not good and their elderly counterparts had advised them to refrain from showing stupidity and recklessness, they did not listen and went to lift the bow. What was the result? Lord Shiva cursed them; the bow did not move. Just like the haughty king Nahush who wanted to have a conjugal relationship with the queen of the Gods known as Indrani, these low-witted kings wished to marry the Goddess of the whole world in the form of Sita, something that is unthinkable.

They had been warned that Sita was not an ordinary princess but Mother Goddess in a human form, but they were deluded, and this led to their extreme humiliation in the front of the huge assembly. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267.]

देखि सपुर परिवार जनक हिय हारेउ ।
नृप समाज जनु तुहिन बनज बन मारेउ ।।89।।
कौसिक जनकहि कहेउ देहु अनुसासन ।
देखि भानु कुल भानु इसानु सरासन ।।90।।

dēkhi sapura parivāra janaka hiya hārē'u.
nrpa samāja janu tuhina banaja bana mārē'u. 89.
kausika janakahi kahē'u dēhu anusāsana.
dēkhi bhānu kula bhānu isānu sarāsana. 90.

89-90. Seeing this (that the kings could not move the bow a bit), Janak, along with the citizens and the royal family members, lost all hopes in their hearts, while the forest of lotuses represented by the assembly of great kings appeared to have been struck by frost.

[When Janak saw that none of the invited kings and princes could move the bow, let alone lift and string it, he was very very angry and upset. He was worried about the future of his daughter as he had tied her marriage to the lifting of the bow. Now, what shall he do?¹

Meanwhile, the kings and princes felt ashamed and humiliated. They returned to their seats with lowered heads in shame and ignominy². This situation is compared to a large number of lotus flowers that wither during severe cold when it frosts.] (89)

Then, Kaushik (Vishwamitra) said to Janak, 'Give your orders (i.e. permission) let the sun of the solar-race (i.e. Sri Ram) have a look at Shiva's bow.'

[In this book 'Janki Mangal', sage Vishwamitra has asked Janak to allow Ram to 'see', i.e. examine and tackle the bow. But in other texts of Tulsidas, the sage had directly ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow and thereby remove the fears and sorrows in the heart of Janak.]³ (90)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 292. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 89, stanza nos. 5-7.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 5.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 11.]

मुनिबर तुम्हरेँ बचन मेरु महि डोलहिं ।
तदपि उचित आचरत पाँच भल बोलहिं ।।91।।
बानु बानु जिमि गयउ गवहिं दसकंधरु ।
को अवनी तल इन सम बीर धुरंधरु ।।92।।

munibara tumharēm bacana mēru mahi dōlahim.
tadapi ucita ācarata pām̐ca bhala bōlahim. 91.
bānu bānu jimi gaya'u gavahim dasakandharu.
kō avanī tala ina sama bīra dhurandharu. 92.

91-92. Janak said—'Oh sage! Even the mountains and the earth can move by your words, but still it is wise to act with prudence as the 'Panchas' (literally, the five noble and elderly persons of the society) praise such action. [In other words, though it is true that nothing is impossible if you want, but still elderly people say that one must consider the pros and cons of all decisions, and never act in haste. I say this because I have a great hesitation in my mind in allowing Ram to approach the bow and face humiliation by not being able to lift it. I am justified for harbouring this doubt, because—]

As the situation stands at present, even formidable warriors have quietly and stealthily escaped from the venue after it became clear to them that they wouldn't be able to move the bow. Take for example Vanasur, the famed demon known for his strength, valour and power, who ran away hurriedly from here like an arrow shot from a bow. Then there is another mighty warrior known as Ravana (the invincible demon king of Lanka who had so much strength that he had once lifted Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord

Shiva, on his shoulders) who too escaped stealthily and quietly went home in order to avoid public ridicule and humiliation by first going to attempt to lift the old and rusty bow and then returning empty-handed without even being able to move it an inch.

Say, who on this earth is as strong, powerful, courageous and valiant as these two warriors, Vanasur and Ravana. [Since even they have not dared to touch the bow and preferred to escape from here unnoticed to save their face from disgrace, it would not be wise to allow Sri Ram, who is so tender and young in age, and who seems to bear no resemblance to the robust and muscular bodies of these two warriors Vanasur and Ravana, to go and try to lift the bow and face certain humiliation. I don't want this to happen—especially when you are present here and have accompanied the two brothers. It would be very bad if Ram fails to lift the bow because you accompany him. I won't like this embarrassing situation to happen. So, please don't ask me to allow Ram to go to the bow and attempt to lift it!]¹ (91-92)

[Note—¹The same thing is said in Ram Charit Manas and Geetawali also.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 256; (c) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 292.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 2.]

पारबती मन सरिस अचल धनु चालक ।
हहिं पुरारि तेउ एक नारि ब्रत पालक । १३ ।।
सो धनु कहिय बिलोकन भूप किसोरहिं ।
भेद कि सरिस सुमन कन कुलिस कठोरहिं । १४ ।।

pārabatī mana sarisa acala dhanu cālaka.
hahim purāri tē'u ēka nāri brata pālaka. 93.
sō dhanu kahiya bilōkana bhūpa kisōrahim.
bhēda ki sirisa sumana kana kulisa kaṭhōrahim. 94.

93-94. [King Janak continuous to speak to sage Vishwamitra, expressing his strong reservations against allowing Lord Ram to attempt to lift the bow.]

'This bow is immovable like the steadiness of the heart and mind of Parvati (the divine consort of Lord Shiva, and the Mother Goddess). It can be moved (i.e. influenced) only by Lord Shiva himself if he wants so. But Shiva keeps the firm vow of being loyal to only one woman, and therefore he will not exert his influence on the 'mind and heart' of the bow to make it move.

[Here, the bow has been personified and is imagined to have a mind and heart like that of Shiva's consort named Parvati. The bow also 'belongs' to Shiva just like Parvati who also 'belongs' to him, being his eternal wife. Like Parvati the bow is also very faithful to Lord Shiva. Hence, if Shiva orders it to become light and move when Lord Ram touches it, it is certainly going to do so, but the problem is that Shiva won't order anything to the bow; he won't exert any influence upon the bow. It is as unmoving as the Mana—mind and heart—of Parvati.] (93)

You are asking this young prince (Lord Ram) who has a delicate constitution and a tender body to have a look at such a formidable bow. [In other words, you, sage Vishwamitra, expect Ram to lift the bow which has defeated all the strong warriors of the

earth. How is it possible because Sri Ram has such a delicate frame, and his body is not as muscular as it is needed to be in order to lift this heavy bow.]]¹

Say sage, is it possible that a most tender flower of the Sesame tree can ever pierce through even a small part of of Vajra, the formidably strong weapon of Indra that is considered to be toughest thing in existence?’

[Here, the bow is compared to Vajra, and Lord Ram’s delicate frame to the tender flower. Just as it is not possible for the flower to pierce the body of the Vajra, it is impossible for Ram to overcome the resistance of the bow to move.] (94)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand it is stated that the womenfolk of the city as well as Sita’s mother and Sita herself have great reservation as to whether Lord Ram would be able to lift and break the heavy and sturdy bow given the fact that he has a delicate constitution and a tender body—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 223 where the womenfolk express their reservations; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 256 where Sita’s mother is doubtful; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258 where Sita herself is in confusion.]

रोम रोम छबि निंदति सोभ मनोजनि ।
देखिय मूरति मलिन करिय मुनि सो जनि ।। 95 ।।
मुनि हँसि कहेउ जनक यह मूरति सोहइ ।
सुमिरत सकृत् मोह मल सकल बिछोहइ ।। 96 ।।

rōma rōma chabi nindati sōbha manōjani.
dēkhiya mūrati malina kariya muni sō jani. 95.
muni ham̐si kahē'u janaka yaha mūrati sōha'i.
sumirata sakṛta mōha mala sakala bichōha'i. 96.

95-96. The beauty, charm and majesty of each pore of Sri Ram’s body are such that they put to shame the beauty and glamour of numerous Kamdeo-cupids taken together. Oh sage! Do not do anything that will make this image look darkened and gloomy (because in case Ram is unable to break the bow, that would be devastating for the spell of charm that he has cast on all of us here in Janakpur, the way we are all thrilled by his majestic presence and enamoured of his magnificent beauty).’ (95)

The sage laughed and replied, ‘Oh Janak! The image (form of Lord Ram) which looks grand and adorable is also capable of eliminating the darkness of ignorance even by remembering it only once. [In other words, don’t think that Ram is an ordinary prince. This physical image that looks so charming to you is also capable of eliminating the darkness created by delusions and ignorance—because, oh king, Ram is a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. So you need not worry. Remember, I am not an ordinary sage, and when I endorse something I am fully aware of my immaculate reputation as the teller of truth. Therefore, you need not harbour any more doubts in your mind and heart. It is in your ignorance that you say that Ram may not break the bow. Let this charming image also charm your inner being, so to say, by eliminating its darkness of doubts and worries.]’ (96)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86, stanza no. 6; verse no. 87.]

सब मल बिछोहनि जानि मूरति जनक कौतुक देखहू ।

धनु सिंधु नृप बल जल बद्धो रघुबरहि कुंभज लेखहू॥
 सुनि सकुचि सोचहिं जनक गुर पद बंदि रघुनंदन चले।
 नहिं हरष हृदय बिषाद कछु भए सगुन सुभ मंगल भले॥12॥

chanda:

saba mala bichōhani jāni mūrati janaka kautuka dēkhahū.
 dhanu sindhu nr̥pa bala jala bar̥haīō raghubarahi kumbhaja lēkhahū.
 suni sakuci sōcahiṁ janaka gura pada bandi raghunandana calē.
 nahim haraṣa hr̥daya biṣāda kachu bha'ē saguna subha maṅgala bhalē. 12.

Chanda 12. ‘Oh Janak! Consider this divine image (of Lord Ram) as being potent enough (i.e. empowered) to remove all sorts of (spiritual) faults, shortcomings, blemishes and defects (that inherently taint the mind and heart of all creatures), and watch this wonderful spectacle unfold before your eyes.

In this bow-like ocean, the water symbolising the strength of these vane kings and princes is in a high tide. Regard Raghubir (Sri Ram) as being equivalent to sage Agastya¹ (who would now dry up this symbolic water of haughtiness and vanity of these proud kings and princes by breaking the bow after all of them have finished trying their might and failing to move it even a bit).

[Just sit back, relax and enjoy; don’t be perturbed or exasperated. Watch calmly as Lord Ram breaks the bow, and then watch the reaction on the kings and princes. Watch their long faces as they shrivel up and wither in humiliation, ignominy and shame when the bow finally breaks.]²

Hearing this, Janak became hesitant, unable to decide what to do. He pondered over the matter even as Lord Sri Ram bowed at the feet of his Guru (Vishwamitra) to pay his obeisance and started to walk towards the bow³. The Lord was emotionless and calm; he had no disturbances in his mind. He was neither joyful at having got this opportunity, nor apprehensive and doubtful at the outcome. He neither exulted nor sulked.

When he moved towards the bow majestically, there were many auspicious signs and good omens portending good tidings and indicating success. (Chanda no. 12)

[Note—¹Sage *Agastya*—This sage had once gulped down the ocean. Sage Vishwamitra cites his instance to stress upon king Janak that just like Agastya had effortlessly emptied the ocean of its water, thereby vanquishing its pride as the ‘mighty ocean’ and the ‘greatest reservoir of water on earth’, Lord Ram would too vanquish the pride of these kings and princes as well as of the bow of being strong and powerful by breaking the bow easily and effortlessly. So the king need not worry.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

The brief story of sage Agastya is as follows—He is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja

(born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vashistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vashistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them. Some of the demons however managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his

palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.

²This is exactly what happened at the instant the bow broke. The assembled kings and princes made a long face, and they literally buried their faces in their hands to hide their shame and humiliation. All their sense of majesty and grandeur vanished in thin air. The night representing their hopes of marrying Sita was obliterated with the rise of the splendorous sun represented by Lord Ram; those amongst the kings who were haughty became dejected and lack-lustre like the lotus flower that closes as soon as the sun rises in the eastern horizon, and wicked ones hid themselves like owls.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 255; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86, stanza no. 6; and verse no. 93, stanza no. 2.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254 that clearly state that when sage Vishwamitra ordered to Ram to get up and break the bow to remove the grief of Janak, the Lord got up calmly without having any emotions, either of joy or of reluctance; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 255 say that the Lord walked towards the bow calmly and without showing any nervousness or emotions; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4.]

बरिसन लगे सुमन सुर दुंदुभि बाजहिं ।
मुदित जनक, पुर परिजन नृपगन लाजहिं । 97 ।।
महि महिधरनि लखन कह बलहि बढावनु ।
राम चहत सिव चापहि चपरि चढावनु । 98 ।।

barisana lagē sumana sura dundubhi bājahiṁ.
 mudita janaka, pura parijana nṛpagana lājahiṁ. 97.
 mahi mahidharani lakhana kaha balahi baṛhāvanu.
 rāma cahata siva cāpahi capari caṛhāvanu. 98.

97-98. The Gods started raining flowers and sounding their kettle-drums in the sky (when Lord Ram moved towards the bow). Janak, the citizens of the city, and the close relatives (of Sita) became exhilarated in their minds and hearts, while the assembled kings felt very humiliated, dejected and ashamed¹. (97)

Laxman asked the earth and Sheshnath (the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its thousand hoods) to be prepared and girdled-up because Sri Ram will soon lift and string the bow, which is bound to be followed by an uproarious thunder and violent vibrations as the bow breaks. [Laxman alerted them to brace themselves for the violent tremors and the earthquake that would follow the breaking of the bow. This was necessary, lest the whole earth would topple over on its side and sink into the vast cosmic ocean.]² (98)

[Note—¹Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 1 also endorses the showering of the flowers and playing of the musical instruments by the Gods in the moments leading upto the breaking of the formidable bow. It also says that joyful excitement permeated throughout the city of Janakpur as the citizens anticipated that Lord Ram would certainly break the bow.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 3-4 it is said that the Gods showered flowers on Lord Ram just during the moments before the Lord actually broke the bow when they observed that the bow was reducing in size and preparing itself to be broken while Lord Ram went around it to circumambulate in order to pay his respects to it.

However, in Ram Charit Manas, the Gods have showered flowers and played their musical instruments only after the bow was broken. However, as soon as Lord Ram stood up to proceed towards the bow, there was immense excitement amongst the citizens who prayed feverishly to the gods and asking them to pawn all their good deeds to ensure that the bow becomes light and Ram breaks it easily—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255.

Sita too prayed fervently to goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva, as well as to the bow itself—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Sita's mother too was very nervous as she hoped for the best—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

²Laxman has warned Seshnath as well as Kurma, the tortoise, also to become alert. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 260; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 1.]

गए सुभायँ राम जब चाप समीपहि ।
 सोच सहित परिवार बिदेह महीपहि ।।99।।
 कहि न सकति कछु सकुचति सिय हियँ सोचइ ।
 गौरि गनेस गिरीसहि सुमिरि सकोचइ ।।100।।

ga'ē subhāyam̐ rāma jaba cāpa samīpahi.
 sōca sahita parivāra bidēha mahīpahi. 99.
 kahi na sakati kachu sakucati siya hiyam̐ sōca'i.
 gauri ganēsa girīsahi sumiri sakōca'i. 100.

99-100. When Sri Ram reached the bow in a calm and composed manner, king Videh (Janak), along with his family members (such as his queen and mother of Sita), became very thoughtful and worried¹.

[The king was naturally worried about the outcome as the future of his daughter hinged on it. He very much wanted Lord Ram to break the bow, but was in doubt because of the Lord's tender age and delicate frame as compared to the robust and muscular bodies of all the other kings and princes. But sage Vishwamitra had already assured him not to worry.] (99)

Sita was unable to say anything openly out of hesitation because it was an established tradition that a bride is not supposed to speak in public. She however became remorseful in her heart, remembering and invoking urgently goddess Gauri (Parvati), Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva simultaneously (to help her out of this muddle by making it possible for Lord Ram to break the bow and settle her future).²

[Sita was hesitant because she was uncertain whether they will answer her prayers or not; she does not know what is in store in her destiny. She prayed earnestly and urgently because there was no time to procrastinate any further. It was a do or die situation for her. Sri Ram was her true and one love, and her union with him now depended on such a ridiculous condition as the breaking of a bow. She felt exasperated and frustrated beyond measure but could not gather courage to speak to her father to abandon his incredulous vows and let her marry the groom of her choice. The only avenue left for her was to pray to the patron Gods and Goddesses of the clan i.e. Lord Shiva and Parvati, beseeching them to intercede on her behalf and ensure that she get her beloved's hand in marriage.

Her dilemma is similar to that of Parvati who has to take the permission of her father Himvan to marry Shiva. Please see Parvati Mangal, verse no. 23 and Chanda 9. This book is published by me separately in this series, as Book no. 5.] (100)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261 describe succinctly the consternations and worries swirling in the mind of the citizens as well as Janak and Sita.

¹Refer also: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252 that describes the grief and worry of the citizens; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 252 that describes the grief and worry of Janak who says sadly that now it is clear that Sita will remain unmarried; and (c) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 that describe the grief and worry of Sita's mother.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 79, stanza no. 2 with reference to the citizens; verse no. 81 with reference to Sita's mother; and verse nos. 86-87 with reference to the Janak.

²Sita's consternation is narrated in: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 3.

Refer also verse no. 101 below.]

होत बिरह सर मगन देखि रघुनाथहि ।
 फरकि बाम भुज नयन देत जनु हाथहि ॥101॥
 धीरज धरति सगुन बल रहति सो नाहिन ।
 बरु किसोर धनु घोर दइउ नहिं दाहिन ॥102॥

hōta biraha sara magana dēkhi raghunāthahi.
 pharaki bāma bhuja nayana dēta janu hāthahi. 101.
 dhīraja dharati saguna bala rahati sō nāhina.
 baru kisōra dhanu ghōra da'i'u nahim dāhina. 102.

101-102. Watching Sri Ram, she (Sita) appears to drown in the ocean of uncertainties that resulted in great anguish, despair and dejection in her mind¹. At that time her left arms and eyelids fluttered as if they were extending their hands of reassurance and support to her (and trying to salvage her from drowning in an ocean of despair and hopelessness)².

[When the left arm and eyelids of a woman flutter it is seen as a good sign. So, amid all the despair and gloom, this sign gave hope and expectation to Sita.] (101)

These auspicious signs made her gather some courage, but it did not last long. [She thought—] ‘The groom is of a young age while the bow is most formidable and huge. The creator is most unfavourable and antagonised towards me now.’³ (102)

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 100 above along with the note appended to it.

²In Ram Charit Manas it is said that when Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati earlier to find a good and suitable groom for her, the left arm and the left eyelids began to flutter, indicating to her that things will turn out in her favour—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 236.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258; (ii) Geetawali, verse no. 78, stanza no. 3.

The sturdiness of the bow and it being as hard as Vajra is also endorsed in verse no. 94 of the present book ‘Janki Mangal’.]

अंतरजामी राम मरम सब जानेउ ।
 धनु चढ़ाइ कोतुकहिं कान लागि तानेउ ॥103॥
 प्रेम परखि रघुबीर सरासन भंजेउ ।
 जनु मृगराज किसोर महाराज भंजेउ ॥104॥

antarajāmī rāma marama saba jānē'u.
 dhanu caṛhā'i kōtukahim kāna lagi tānē'u. 103.
 prēma parakhi raghubīra sarāsana bhañjē'u.
 janu mṛgarāja kisōra mahārāja bhañjē'u. 104.

103-104. When Lord Ram reached the bow, he glanced at Sita (also known as Janki as she was the daughter of Janak). Intuitively he recognized what was going on inside her mind and heart because the Lord is ‘all-knowing’, and therefore he knows the inner thoughts of the other person¹. So, the Lord lifted the bow in a playful manner (i.e. without any effort, easily, cheerfully and playfully), stringed it, and then pulled the string back right upto his ears (thereby bending the bow).

[Lord Ram realised the emotional upheaval going on inside Sita. He could make it out from her face and her demeanours. The Lord saw that Sita was praying fervently to

Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati to make it possible for him to break the bow. Sita's anxiousness and a strong desire to have him as her groom were evident from her expressions. Lord Ram wanted to ascertain the wishes of Sita before he would touch the bow, but when he found that Sita longed to have him as her groom, he made a final decision of lifting the bow. Not only this, the Lord stringed it and then pulled its string back upto his ears in a mode that is done when one shoots an arrow from a bow.] (103)

After having ascertained the intensity and sincerity of love and affection that Sita had for him, Raghubir (the brave warrior of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Sri Ram) broke the bow just like a lion's cub kills a huge elephant.

[The lion jumps on the back of an elephant and kills it. Here, Lord Ram is compared to the lion's cub because just like the cub being the son of the king of the forest, the lion, Lord Ram is also a 'son of a king, king Dasrath of the Raghu dynasty', and the bow is compared to the mighty elephant.] (104)

[Note—¹An identical account of this incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas as well as Geetawali. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 3.

The breaking of the bow has been described elsewhere also in Geetawali, Baal Kand. Refer; verse no. 90, stanza no. 6; verse no. 93-94.]

गंजेउ सो गर्जेउ घोर धुनि सुनि भूपि भूधर लरखरे।
रघुबीर जस मुक्ता बिपुल सब भुवन पटु पेटक भरे॥
हित मुदित अनहित रुदित मुख छबि कहत कबि धनु जाग की।
जनु भोर चक्क चकोर कैरव सघन कमल तड़ाग की॥13॥

chanda:

ganjē'u sō garjē'u ghōra dhuni suni bhūpi bhūdhara larakharē.
raghubīra jasa mukatā bipula saba bhuvana paṭu pēṭaka bharē.
hita mudita anahita rudita mukha chabi kahata kabi dhanu jāga kī.
janu bhōra cakka cakōra kairava saghana kamala tarāga kī. 13.

Chanda 13. When the bow was broken, there was such a terrible roar and a thunderous snapping sound that the earth and the mountains shook and trembled¹.

Treasure chests represented by all the worlds appeared to get filled with the pearls symbolising the glory and fame of Raghubir (Sri Ram)². [That is, this tremendous feat of Lord Ram of having successfully broken a bow that had defied the might of all other great kings of that time instantly spread his glory far and wide in all the corners of the world. In this stanza, Lord Ram's great deeds and his countless other virtues are likened to the priceless pearls, and the different corners of the world to different treasure chests. The Lord's glories were so huge and countless that all such chests were filled and brimming over. In other words, the Lord's glories and fame resounded in all the corners of the world so much that nothing else was heard at that time.]

This caused immense exultation, exhilaration and joy amongst friendly people³, while the face of those who were inimical and jealous became dejected, gloomy and remorseful⁴.

[The citizens and some of the wise kings erupted in joy, while the kings who had wanted to break the bow and marry Sita obviously felt dejected and sullen.]

The poet (Tulsidas) attempts to describe the scene at that moment at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony by comparing it with the natural scene witnessed at dawn at a pond/lake which has a large number of lotus flowers as well as water lilies, and where large flocks of birds known as Chakors as well as pairs of Chakvas and Chakvis⁵ abound.

[At day-break, the lotus begins to open its petals and pairs of Chakvas and Chakvis begin to hop around joyfully. They represent friendly people and wise kings who felt happy and cheerful at the good development of Lord Ram successfully breaking the bow.

On the other hand were inimical people such as the jealous kings and princes who felt very sad and exasperated when Ram broke the bow. Their gloom and desperation is compared to the water lily and the Chakor which feel gloomy as the sun begins to rise.

Here, the 'sun' is the glory of Lord Ram and his success at establishing himself as the greatest warrior of all times by being able to break a bow that none of the kings and princes could as much as move even a fraction of an inch.

As soon as it became clear that Ram is the successful candidate who will get the hands of Sita in marriage, the defeated kings felt gloomy like the bird known as Chakor that feels upset when the sun rises as it prefers the moon to the sun, as well as the water lily which shrivels up when the sun rises.

In contrast, the citizens of Janakpur, the gods as well as wise kings who had decided not to go near the bow, felt happy like the Chakvi and Chakva as well as the lotus flower which opens its petals at the sight of the sun to indicate that it is feeling cheerful at seeing the face of the sun.] (Chanda no. 13)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 261 along with its preceding Chandas and Chaupai line no. 8. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 5. And (iii) Kavitaawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 11.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 3.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 4; verse no. 92, stanza no. 4; verse no. 93, stanza nos. 1, 3; and verse no. 94.

⁴Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263; Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 266. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 94, stanza no. 2; and verse no. 95, stanza no. 1.

⁵Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 95, stanza no. 4 which says exactly the same thing.

(a) Chakor = Indian red legged partridge which is said to be enamoured of the moon and shuns the sun; (b) Chakava = An ostrich like bird; (c) Chakvi = Female Chakava.]

नभ पुर मंगल गान निसान गहागहे ।
देखि मनोरथ सुरतरु ललित लहालहे ।।105 ।।
तब उपरोहित कहेउ सखीं सब गावन ।
चलीं लेवाइ जानकिहि भा मन भावन ।।106 ।।

nabha pura maṅgala gāna nisāna gahāgahē.
 dēkhi manōratha surataru lalita lahālahē. 105.
 taba uparōhita kahē'u sakhīm saba gāvana.
 calīm lēvā'i jānakihi bhā mana bhāvana. 106.

105-106. Both in the city as well as in the sky, there was a tumultuous cacophony of sound of merry singing of auspicious songs and beating of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums when everyone found that the beautiful Kalpa Tree (which is the all wish-fulfilling tree of Gods; the *Nyctanthes arbor tristis* tree) representing fulfilled desires has bloomed.

[When Lord Ram broke the bow, it signaled the fulfillment of desire of everyone, whether it were the citizens, king Janak, Sita and his mother, or even the Gods, that Ram should become the groom for Sita. The 'Kalpa Tree' is a metaphor used in classical literature to indicate fulfillment of desires and wishes. Therefore, as soon as Ram snapped the bow, the city and the sky erupted in spontaneous cheering. There was joyous singing and enthusiastic playing of musical instruments almost instantaneously.] (105)

The royal priest (named Shatanand) ordered all the companions and friends of Sita to sing auspicious songs befitting the occasion. So, all of them started singing merrily in unison as they took her with them to the place where Lord Ram stood majestically after breaking the bow (so that Sita could put the victory garland around the Lord's neck and declare her marriage with him). In this way, Sita's heart-felt wish that she be married to Ram was fulfilled. (106)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265; (b) Doha no. 285—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286; (c) Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 311.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 93, stanza no. 1; verse no. 94; verse no. 96, stanza nos. 2-5.]

कर कमलनि जयमाल जानकी सोहइ ।
 बरनि सकै छबि अतुलित अस कबि कोहइ ॥107॥
 सीय सनेह सकुच बस पिय तन हेरइ ।
 सुरतरु रुख सुरबेलि पवन जनु फेरइ ॥108॥

kara kamalani jayamāla jānakī sōha'i.
 barani sakai chabi atulita asa kabi kōha'i. 107.
 sīya sanēha sakuca basa piya tana hēra'i.
 surataru rukha surabēli pavana janu phēra'i. 108.

107-108. The 'Jaimaal' (victory garland) looks most adorable in Janki's (Sita's) hands. Say, which poet can ever describe that indescribable and incomparable scene¹?

[The sight of Sita standing with the victory garland in her hands was so fabulous and grand that no poet can ever be able to describe its magnificence and beauty though usually they are thought to be skilled in the use of words and experts in describing the beauty of Nature. But that scene defied their expertise and skill as it is beyond description in words. It ought to be noted that Tulsidas has liberally employed the 'present tense' in

his narrative to indicate that whatever he says is being revealed to him on the canvas of his mind like a live video of events that actually happened thousands and thousands of years ago. Well, this is the standard technique employed by all great bards whose narratives are so vivid and lively that they transport the reader to the actual moment when the event was taking place.] (107)

Sita looks affectionately but hesitantly towards her beloved (i.e. Lord Ram)² as if a soft wind is trying to move a delicate creeper nearer to the Kalpa Tree.

[Here, Sita is compared to the ‘creeper’, and Lord Ram to the Kalpa Tree. Sita’s wish was to get close to Lord Ram permanently, and live with the Lord for the rest of her life just like the creeper that survives only when it wraps around the tree. The ‘soft wind’ here refers to the good turn of events that has enabled this to happen. It also may refer to the summons of the royal priest, Shatanand, inviting Sita with the victory garland to be put around the neck of Lord Ram.

There is yet another way of interpreting this verse. When Sita approaches Lord Ram, she is full of emotions. Anxiety, helplessness and desperation have given way suddenly to happiness, success and fulfillment. She seems overwhelmed and overjoyed, not knowing what to say and how to react. As she approaches Lord Ram, her eyes flicker, once looking at the Lord’s charming face and then looking away. She hesitates to gaze at the Lord because it would be too immodest to do so, but at the same time she is unable to resist the desire to see the Lord’s charming and handsome form. This constant flickering of her sight is compared to the swaying of the creeper as it is buffeted by the wind—once moving closer to the trunk of the Kalpa Tree and then moving slightly away from it. In this comparison, the ‘wind’ would be the changing emotions of Sita—once impelling her to fix her sight on her beloved by foregoing formalities and neglecting social niceties, and then deterring her from doing so as it would be deemed immodest and against traditions for a young girl to look at another person so intently.] (108)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 264. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 1.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6 that precede Doha no. 264. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 93, stanza no. 1; verse no. 94; verse no. 96, stanza nos. 2-5.]

लसत ललित कर कमल माल पहिरावत ।
काम फंद जनु चंदहि बनज फँसावत ।।109 ।।
राम सीय छबि निरुपम निरुपम सो दिनु ।
सुख समाज लखि रानिन्ह आनँद छिनु—छिनु ।।110 ।।

lasata lalita kara kamala māla pahirāvata.
kāma phanda janu candahi banaja phamśāvata. 109.
rāma sīya chabi nirupama nirupama sō dinu.
sukha samāja lakhi rāninha ānamda chinu-chinu. 110.

109-110. The most fascinating sight of Sita putting the garland around the neck of Lord Ram resembled the scene when of a lotus flower traps the beautiful face of the full moon in a snare belonging to Kamdeo-cupid¹.

While she (Sita) was putting the garland around Lord Sri Ram's neck, she looked most adorable as if the lotus traps the moon in the snare of Kamdeo-cupid.

[This is a fine example of excellent imagery. The lotus flower is compared to Sita here, and Lord Ram's beautiful face to the full moon. When Sita lifted her arms to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck, the face of the Lord was framed within her arms as well as the garland they held. It appeared that one was viewing the full moon through the loop formed by the bent stem of a beautiful lotus flower.

This view is invoked here by Tulsidas to describe the beauty of the instant when Sita had lifted her delicate hands to put the garland around the neck of Lord Ram. At that specific moment, Lord Ram's face was cupped within the two extended arms of Sita as she lifted the garland to put it around the neck of the Lord, and the Lord had to bend his face a bit and hold it closer to Sita's face to facilitate her doing it. At the same time as Sita's arms circling Lord Ram's face, the Lord's face was also framed by the garland as it was being moved over his head to be placed around the neck.

The garland and the fair complexion of Sita's arms are compared to the lotus flower, while the face of Lord is likened to the full moon. Sita's face is like the face of Kamdeo-cupid, and the mutual love and affection that the Ram and Sita had for each other is the 'snare' of Kamdeo who is the patron god of love and desires.

Another way of looking at this verse is as follows: The hands of Sita that held the garland are like the beautiful lotus flower with its curved stem, Lord Sri Ram's face is equivalent to the full moon, and the garland itself is the snare of Kamdeo-cupid. This is because with this garland Sita appears to have virtually 'trapped' Lord Ram permanently in the 'snare' of her 'beauty' which was a reflection of the beauty of Kamdeo. She has also 'trapped' Lord Ram in the 'snare' of her intense 'love and affection' for the Lord, virtues for which Kamdeo is cited as a meptahor, for all times to come.] (109)

The wonderful and fabulous image on that auspicious day of Lord Sri Ram and Sita standing together was simply matchless². The queens (i.e. members of the royal household) were feeling very ecstatic every moment of that wonderful day when happiness and rejoicing pervaded everywhere³. (110)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264 which makes an exactly similar comparison.

(ii) In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4, the comparison is made to a line of white Swans coming and sitting on the black catechu plant. In this version, the row of Swans is compared to the garland, and the dark-complexioned body of Lord with the dark-coloured catechu plant.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 6.]

प्रभुहि माल पहिराइ जनकिहि लै चलीं ।
सखीं मनहुँ बिधु उदय मुदित कैरव कलीं ॥111॥
बरषहिं बिबुध प्रसून हरषि कहि जय जए ।
सुख सनेह भरे भुवन राम गुर पहुँ गए ॥112॥

prabhuhi māla pahirā'i janakihi lai calīm.
sakhīm manahum'bidhu udaya mudita kairava kalīm. 111.

baraṣahim bibudha prasūna haraṣi kahi jaya ja'e.
sukha sanēha bharē bhuvana rāma gura paham̐ ga'e. 112.

111-112. After garlanding the Lord, the companions took Janki (Sita) away cheerfully¹. They were as happy and excited as well as full of warmth and thrill as if the buds of the water-lily warmly open up when they see the moon rise.

[In this scene, the many companions of Sita are compared to the many water lilies in a pond, and Lord Ram's as well as Sita's cheerful faces to the full moon. When Sita's friends saw both Ram and Sita happy at their union, they too felt exceedingly happy.] (111)

The Gods were exhilarated, and they jubilantly showered flowers from the sky². At that time, all the Bhuvans (corners of the world) were filled with happiness, joy and cheer. After Sita left with her companions, Lord Ram too proceeded from the spot where the bow lay broken on the ground to where his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) was seated. (112)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 267.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 267.]

गए राम गुरु पहिं राउ रानी नारि—नर आनंद भरे ।
जनु तृषित करि करिनी निकर सीतल सुधासागर परे ॥
कौसिकहि पूजि प्रसंसि आयसु पाइ नृप सुख पायऊ ।
लिखि लगन तिलक समाज सजि कुल गुरहि अवध पढायऊ ॥१४॥

chanda:

ga'e rāma guru pahim̐ rā'u rānī nāri-nara ānam̐da bharē.
janu tr̥ṣita kari karinī nikara sītala sudhāsāgara parē.
kausikahi pūji prasansi āyasu pā'i nr̥pa sukha pāya'ū.
likhi lagana tilaka samāja saji kula gurahi avadha paṭhāya'ū. 14.

Chanda 14. Sri Ram went near his Guru. The king and the queens as well as the men and women folk (citizens) were all exhilarated and excited, feeling overjoyed with warmth and happiness as if a horde of thirsty male and female elephants has plunged in a cool ocean consisting of Amrit, the nectar that not only quenches their thirst but also injects fresh life in the group of tired elephants.

[During hot summer days, the elephants get mad with thirst. When they find a water body, they plunge head-on into it. Imagine their pleasure when instead of a small pond or lake containing ordinary they find an ocean full of cool soothing nectar! They would jump and hop madly in ecstasy as they plod into this ocean, and would never wish to come out. These elephants would feel extremely happy and joyful as well as contented. The citizens of Janakpur felt like these elephants. A few moments ago there was uncertainty and anxiety symbolizing the intense thirst of the agitated elephants, and now when Lord Ram has broken the bow and it has become final that he would marry Sita, the

citizens erupted in joy like the thirsty elephants suddenly discovering a large ocean full of nectar. What more could they expect and want?]

The king (Janak, the father of Sita) worshipped and honoured Kaushik (Vishwamitra), got his blessings, and felt very happy and contented. Then he prepared an invitation-card showing the auspicious time when the stars would be favourable for the marriage ceremony to be formalized. [This is called a 'Lagan'.]

Then he assembled all the necessary items needed for the Tilak ceremony (which is equivalent to the official engagement of the bride with the groom), and sent it along with the formal invitation to Ayodhya (to Ram's father, king Dasrath) through his messenger, his royal priest named Shatanand.¹ (Chanda no. 14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287.]

Preparations for marriage of Lord Ram with Sita

[After Lord Ram broke the bow to seal his marriage with Sita, and she had put the victory garland around his neck, celebrations and preparations for the actual marriage ceremony began in right earnest in the city of Janakpur. The city was colourfully decorated, formal rituals were done, and Ram's father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, was invited along with the marriage party which included his other two sons Bharat and Shatrughan.

These events are described below in verse nos. 113—126, and Chanda no. 15.]

गुनि गन बोलि कहेउ नृप माँडव छावन ।
गावहिं गीत सुआसिनि बाज बधावन ॥113॥
सीय राम हित पूजहिं गौरि गनेसहि ।
परिजन पुरजन सहित प्रमोद नरेसहि ॥114॥

guni gana bōli kahē'u nrpa māmḍava chāvana.
gāvahiṁ gīta su'āsini bāja badhāvana. 113.
sīya rāma hita pūjahim gauri ganēsahi.
parijana purajana sahita pramōda narēsahi. 114.

113-114. The king (Janak) summoned expert artisans and instructed them to prepare and decorate the 'Mandap' (which is a large decorated platform covered by a canopy under which the marriage is solemnised)¹. Young married girls began singing auspicious and felicitous songs suitable for the occasion, while ceremonial music was played cheerfully all around the city². (113)

They worshipped Gauri (Parvati) and Ganesh (the deity worshipped first during all religious ceremonies) for the all round welfare of Sita and Lord Sri Ram³.

In this manner, the king, along with his kith and kin as well as the people of the city, felt very happy, delighted and contented⁴. (114)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 289.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 263; (b) Doha no. 263; (c) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 264—to

Chaupai no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265; (d) Doha no. 285; (e) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 286; (f) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 297.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 257; (b) Doha no. 287 which says that sage Vishwamitra has asked king Janak to observe all rituals and formalities according to the tradition of his clan; (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322; (d) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 312; and (e) Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 that specifically mention that Gauri and Ganesh were worshipped.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 262 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 263; (c) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 286; (d) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

प्रथम हरदि बंदन करि मंगल गावहिं ।
करि कुल रीति कलस थपि तेलु चढ़ावहिं ।।115।।
गे मुनि अवध बिलोकि सुसरित नहायउ ।
सतानंद सत कोटि नाम फल पायउ ।।116।।

prathama haradi bandana kari maṅgala gāvahiṁ.
kari kula rīti kalasa thapi tēlu caṛhāvahiṁ. 115.
gē muni avadha bilōki susarita nahāya'u.
satānanda sata kōṭi nāma phala pāya'u. 116.

115-116. To begin with, they put 'Haldi' (turmeric) on the body of Sita, and sang auspicious and felicitous songs. They observed the traditions of the clan, put the ceremonial 'Kalash' (pots or vessels), and filled them with oil¹. (115)

Meanwhile, the sage (Shatanand) arrived at Ayodhya (as a messenger of king Janak, with an invitation for king Dasrath to attend the marriage ceremony of Ram with Sita)², and bathed in river Saryu. This bath gave him the reward of repeating 100 crore holy names of the Lord. {1 crore = 10 million. This is because river Saryu is said to be as holy as river Ganges, the river that traces its origin in the toe-nails of Lord Vishnu.} (116)

[Note—¹Refer: In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 287 sage Vishwamitra has asked king Janak to observe all rituals and formalities according to the tradition of his clan.

This is reiterated again in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 1 of stanza no. 2 that precede Doha no. 323, and (b) Chanda line no. 1 of Stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324 that say that the royal priests of both the sides, i.e. the side of the groom (Ram) as well as the bride (Sita), did all the rites according to their respective customs.

²King Janak sent his royal priest named Shatanand to Ayodhya with a message for Lord Ram's father, king Dasrath, informing him of the events that unfolded at Janakpur. He was invited to come to attend the marriage ceremony with full royal honours. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 287; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 293. However, it ought to be noted here that the name of the messenger is not mentioned in Ram Charit Manas.

But in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 103, stanza no. 1 it is said that Janak had sent is 'royal priest' as a messenger with the invitation for Dasrath. This 'royal priest' was none else but Shatanand.]

नृप सुनि आगे आइ पूजि सनमानेउ ।
दीन्हि लगन कहि कुसल राउ हरषानेउ ।।117।।
सुनि पुर भयउ अनंद बधाव बजावहिं ।
सजहिं सुमंगल कलस बितान बनावहिं ।।118।।

nrpa suni āgē ā'i pūji sanamānē'u.
dīnhi lagana kahi kusala rā'u haraṣānē'u. 117.
suni pura bhaya'u ananda badhāva bajāvahiṁ.
sajahiṁ sumāṅgala kalasa bitāna banāvahiṁ. 118.

117-118. Hearing of the arrival of the sage, the king (Dasrath) came forward to warmly welcome, worship and honour him. Then the sage exchanged pleasantries and gave him the invitation-card called 'Lagan Patrika'. This made the king extremely happy and jubilant¹.

[The 'Lagan Patrika' is a letter detailing all the auspicious moments when the stars are favourable, and when all the various religious ceremonies and rituals associated with solemnization of marriage are to be performed.] (117)

Hearing this news (or, as soon as this good news spread), there was great rejoicing in the city and spontaneous felicitous music began to be played. Auspicious ceremonial pots and pitchers were put up everywhere in the city, and colourful awnings and canopies were spread everywhere, here and there throughout the city². (118)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 293.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 295—to Doha no. 297.]

राउ छाँड़ि सब काज साज सब साजहिं ।
चलेउ बरात बनाइ पूजि गनराजहिं ।।119।।
बाजहिं ढोल निसान सगुन सुभ पाइन्हि ।
सिय नैहर जनकौर नगर नियराइन्हि ।।120।।

rā'u chāmṛdi saba kāja sāja saba sājahim.
calē'u barāta banā'i pūji ganarājahim. 119.
bājahim ḍhōla nisāna saguna subha pā'inhi.
siya naihara janakaura nagara niyarā'inhi. 120.

119-120. The king (Dasrath) kept aside all other routine work and started preparations for assembling a grand marriage party¹. He worshipped Lord Ganesh and then embarked on the journey (to Janakpur)². (119)

Drums and trumpets are being sounded³, and auspicious signs and omens are occurring regularly⁴. In this way, amidst constant rejoicing and merry-making, the groom's party headed for Sita's place⁵. By and by, the city of Janakpur came near⁶. (120)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 294—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) from Doha no. 310—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 302; and (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Doha no. 302 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

नियरानि नगर बरात हरषी लेन अगवानी गए।
देखत परस्पर मिलत मानत प्रेम परिपूरन भए॥
आनंदपुर कौतुक कोलाहल बनत सो बरनत कहाँ।
लै दियो तहँ जनवास सकल सुपास नित नूतन जहाँ॥15॥

chanda:

niyarāni nagara barāta haraṣī lēna agavānī ga'ē.
dēkhata paraspara milata mānata prēma paripūrana bha'ē.
ānandapura kautuka kōlāhala banata sō baranata kahām̃.
lai diyō taham̃ janavāsa sakala supāsa nita nūtana jahām̃. 15.

Chanda 15. The marriage party arrived near the city of Janakpur. Then all the people of the city went forward to enthusiastically and warmly welcome the honoured guests. Everyone from the bride's side amiably and cheerfully met everyone from the groom's side. This led to great bonhomie and development of a strong bond of mutual trust and friendship between the two sides. All were contented and felt fulfilled in every way.¹

There was great rejoicing, festivities, vibrant celebrations and a uproarious tumult in the city as it erupted in joyous abundance when the marriage party arrived. Tulsidas wonders how anyone can ever describe it in words. [That is, it is not possible to narrate in words the spirit of joy and happiness that prevailed during that time. One must imagine it.]

After the welcoming formalities were over, the guests (of marriage party) were taken to the designated place of lodging which was arranged for their comfortable stay. It had all the amenities one could think of, and the guests were treated to such regal comforts and pleasures that they desired nothing more. Nothing was left unattended, nothing was left to chance, and every need one could imagine of was well-provided for.² (15)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 306.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

गे जनवासहिं कौसिक राम लखन लिए ।
 हरषे निरखि बरात प्रेम प्रमुदित हिए ॥121॥
 हृदयँ लाइ लिए गोद मोद अति भूपहि ।
 कहि न सकहिं सत सेष अनंद अनूपहि ॥122॥

gē janavāsahim kausika rāma lakhana li'ē.
 haraṣē nirakhi barāta prēma pramudita hi'ē. 121.
 hr̥dayam̐ lā'i li'ē gōda mōda ati bhūpahi.
 kahi na sakahim̐ sata sēṣa ananda anūpahi. 122.

121-122. Kaushik (Vishwamitra) took Sri Ram and Laxman and went to the place where the marriage party was lodged, a place called Janwasa. He felt very happy on seeing the party; his heart was blooming with emotions of endearment, love and affection.

[Sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers Ram and Laxman were lodged at a different place. So when the news came that king Dasrath has arrived with the marriage party, the sage took the two brothers along with him to meet the king.] (121)

The king affectionately embraced Sri Ram and Laxman and seated them lovingly on his laps. He felt extremely pleased and exhilarated at that moment. Not even hundreds of Sheshnaths (the legendary hundred hooded serpents) can ever describe the immense sense of joy and exhilaration that flowed at that time in abundance at that time.

[In other words, thousands of expert narrators and writers will never be able to describe the intensity of love and affection as well as the atmosphere of joy, happiness and cheer that prevailed during those moments when king Dasrath met his two sons Ram and Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra.

The loving father who was not willing to part with his two beloved sons at any cost, but had to relent and send them to the far away forest to fight demons under pressure of the two great sages, sage Vashistha and sage Vishwamitra, would naturally be overjoyed and brim-over with love and ecstasy on seeing them once again. And it was not an ordinary reunion. As every father would dream of, king Dasrath was extremely delighted and pleased to learn that his son Ram has established his majesty and glory on his own in the middle of an assembly where all the mighty and powerful kings and princes of the world at that time were present.

To add icing to the cake, his son had succeeded in marrying a beautiful princess by defeating all other contenders in full public view, and this was no ordinary or lean achievement as the victory was centered on breaking of an object, the bow, that was regarded as being as much invincible and strong as the 'Vajra', the mighty weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. Therefore, this victory established Lord Ram's fame throughout the world instantaneously. Say, what more can or would a father ever want?

Hence, the happiness of Dasrath knew no bounds, and it had many dimensions—he was happy to meet his beloved sons once again; he was happy to see Ram established as a matchless warrior having an equally matchless strength and might; he was happy that he has got married; and he was happy that the father-in-law of Ram is also a renowned king in his own right.] (122).

[Note—See verse nos. 123-124 below.

This episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 307—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309.]

रायँ कौसिकहि पूजि दान बिप्रन्ह दिए।
 राम सुमंगल हेतु सकल मंगल किए॥123॥
 ब्याह बिभूषन भूषित भूषन भूषन।
 बिस्व बिलोचन बनज बिकासक पूषन॥124॥

rāyam̐ kausikahi pūji dāna bipranha di'ē.
 rāma sumāṅgala hētu sakala maṅgala ki'ē. 123.
 byāha bibhūṣana bhūṣita bhūṣana bhūṣana.
 bisva bilōcana banaja bikāsaka pūṣana. 124.

123-124. The king (Dasrath) worshipped sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and gave alms to Brahmins generously. Besides that, he did all the good deeds that were deemed necessary for the welfare and good of Sri Ram who is akin to a sun for helping the lotus-like eyes of the world to develop and bloom.

[The metaphor of the lotus and the sun is used to mean that Lord Ram gives immense happiness and joy to the world. The Lord's sight and presence is a giver of all sorts of cheerfulness and happiness to the creatures of this world. Lord Ram is compared to the 'sun', and the rest of the world to the 'lotus flower'. When the world 'sees' the Lord with it's 'eyes', it becomes jubilant and exhilarated just like the lotus flower that opens its petals as soon as it sees the rising sun.]

He (Ram)—who is like the intrinsic quality of beauty, charm and magnificence that is inherent to all beautiful ornaments—is himself adorned with ornaments befitting the happy occasion of marriage.

[In other words, though the Lord is intrinsically beautiful and charming because he is a personified form of the Supreme Being from whom the beautiful Mother Nature has emerged, and therefore he does not need any external ornamentation to make him more beautiful and charming, but still the Supreme Being accepts worldly obligations and requirements that come with his having assumed a human form as Lord Ram. Therefore, he gladly accepted his gross body being decorated by gross ornaments though his original divine body does not need any such decorations. The Lord indeed personifies the virtues of beauty, charm and magnificence, and since he pervades the world from the inside as well as the outside, it did not matter to him if some signs of artificial decorations are put on his gross body¹.] (123-124)

[Note—These verses follow the previous verse nos. 121-122.

¹The way the Lord was decorated and attired in beautiful clothes that made his physical appearance exceptionally fabulous is narrated in detail in—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 316; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 108.]

मध्य बरात बिराजत अति अनुकूलेउ।
 मनहुँ काम आराम कलपतरु फूलेउ॥125॥
 पठई भेंट बिदेह बहुत बहु भौँतिन्ह।

देखत देव सिहाहिं अनंद बरातिन्ह ॥126॥

madhya barāta birājata ati anukūlē'u.
manahum̐ kāma ārāma kalapataru phūlē'u. 125.
paṭha'ī bhēṇṭa bidēha bahuta bahu bhāmṭinha.
dēkhata dēva sihāhiṁ ananda barātinha. 126.

125-126. He (Lord Ram) looks very adorable and elegant as he stood with a cheerful mind in the middle of the exuberant marriage party. This sight reminds one of the magnificent garden of Kamdeo-cupid where a beautiful all wish-fulling Kalpa Tree stands majestically in the center.

[Here, Lord Ram is likened to the 'Kalpa Tree', and the marriage party of cheerful members as the 'garden of Kamdeo-cupid'. Kamdeo is the patron god of beauty and charm as well as everything else associated with these virtues. This implies that every member of the marriage party is finely attired and look adorable, but like the Kalpa Tree standing majestically in the middle of the garden and becoming the center of attraction for everyone as no other tree can match it in its beauty and its ability to please everyone, Lord Ram too stands out uniquely and looks exceptional in this august gathering.] (125)

Videh (king Janak) sent countless varieties of gifts for the guests. The Gods praised such gesture and the members of the marriage party felt very happy, delighted and contented.

[The Gods praised king Janak for being noble-hearted and liberal in giving gifts to the invited guests. The guests on the other hand felt happy and contented as it indicated that they are being properly honoured and shown due respect by the bride's father. The immensity of the gifts also showed them that he is rich and prosperous. Of course everyone of the groom's side would feel happy on finding out that the bride's side is prosperous and well-off financially.] (126)

Sri Ram's marriage with Sita

[The marriage of Lord Ram with Sita was solemnized with great rejoicing and fanfare in the presence of the citizens of the two kingdoms, i.e. Janakpur and Ayodhya, as well as the Gods who witnessed the ceremony from the sky. The events of the time were etched in the memory of time for eternity.

Lord Ram's marriage is described below from verse nos. 127—to 152, and Chanda no. 15—to 19. All the other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were also married at the same time. Their marriage is narrated from verse nos. 153—to 156.

The feast after the marriage is described in verse nos. 159-160 and Chanda no. 20.]

बेद बिदित कुलरीति कीन्हि दुहुँ कुलगुर ।
पठई बोलि बरात जनक प्रमुदित मन ॥127॥
जाइ कहेउ पगु धारिअ मुनि अवधेसहि ।
चले सुमिरि गुरु गौरि गिरिस गनेसहि ॥128॥

bēda bidita kularīti kīnhi duhum³ kulagura.
 paṭha'ī bōli barāta janaka pramudita mana. 127.
 jā'ī kahē'u pagu dhāri'a muni avadhēsahi.
 calē sumiri guru gauri girīsa ganēsahi. 128.

127-128. The two Gurus of the respective clans completed all the prescribed formal rites as ordained by the Vedas¹. Thereafter, Janak cheerfully sent an invitation to the groom's party to come to the venue. (127)

Then the sage (Shatanand) went to the residence of the groom's party (the Janwasa) and respectfully invited them, saying, 'Please come along'. At this, the members of the marriage party headed by king Dasrath invoked and remembered the Guru (Vashistha), Gauri (Parvati), Girish (Shiva) and Ganesh, and then set off for the marriage venue.² (128)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319.

²Refer: When the auspicious moment arrived, king Janak invited king Dasrath and others to come with Lord Ram to the venue of the marriage ceremony. Janak warmly welcomed each one of them and gave them their respective seats. He showed special honour to Dasrath and his close associates. These events are narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 312—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.

As far as king Dasrath invoking the blessings of the Guru and Gods before departure for the venue, it is specifically mentioned so also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

चले सुमिरि गुर सुर सुमन बरषहिं परे बहुबिधि पावड़े ।
 सनमानि सब बिधि जनक दसरथ किये प्रेम कनावड़े ।।
 गुन सकल सम समधी परस्पर मिलन अति आनंद लहे ।
 जय धन्य जय जय धन्य धन्य बिलोकि सुर नर मुनि कहे ।।16।।

chanda:

calē sumiri gura sura sumana baraṣahiṁ parē bahubidhi pāvaṛē.
 sanamāni saba bidhi janaka dasaratha kiyē prēma kanāvaṛē.
 guna sakala sama samadhī paraspara milana ati ānamḍa lahē.
 jaya dhan'ya jaya jaya dhan'ya dhan'ya bilōki sura nara muni kahē. 16.

Chanda 16. He (Dasrath) remembered his Guru and started for the venue of the marriage ceremony. The Gods showered flowers and a variety of red carpets were spread out to welcome him. Janak did all that was possible to show honour to Dasrath so much so that the latter was overwhelmed with the affection shown towards him by the former. The two felt most exhilarated and joyous when they met each other. Both of them were comparable to each other in terms of virtues, glories, fames, as well as good and noble characters.

Watching the two (i.e. Janak and Dasrath), the Gods as well as humans, including great sages and seers, felt extremely cheerful and happy. They lauded this pair and exclaimed in unison—‘It is a remarkable pair. Glory to them! Indeed they are worthy of praise and laurels.’ (Chanda no. 16)

[Note—The meeting of the two kings Janak and Dasrath has been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.

Refer also to verse no. 129 below.]

तीनि लोक अवलोकहिं नहिं उपमा कोउ ।
दसरथ जनक समाज जनक दसरथ दोउ ॥129॥
सजहिं सुमंगल साज रहस रनिवासहि ।
गान करहिं पिकबैनि सहित परिहासहि ॥130॥

tīni lōka avalōkahim nahim upamā kō'u.
dasaratha janaka samāja janaka dasaratha dō'u. 129.
sajahim sumaṅgala sāja rahasa ranivāsahi.
gāna karahim pikabaini sahita parihāsahi. 130.

129-130. They (i.e. the Gods, the ordinary humans and the exalted sages and seers) search in all the three worlds (the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean; everywhere) but cannot find anything appropriate to compare with kings Dasrath and Janak. Indeed, Dasrath and Janak are unique in themselves¹. (129)

In the bride's household, there is great rejoicing and exultation. Everyone is busy decorating and assembling things which are necessary accessories for such happy occasions (of marriage), while sweet-voiced beautiful women are singing felicitous songs, making marry and cracking jokes.² (130)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 320 that unanimously endorse this observation.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 317—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 319; (b) Chaupai line no. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 322; (c) Chanda that precedes Doha no. 322.]

उमा रमादिक सुरतिय सुनि प्रमुदित भई ।
कपट नारि बर बेष बिरचि मंडप गई ॥131॥
मंगल आरति साज बरहि परिछन चलीं ।
जनु बिगसीं रबि उदय कनक पंकज कलीं ॥132॥

umā ramādika suratiya suni pramudita bha'im.
kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣa biraci maṇḍapa ga'im. 131.
maṅgala āraṭi sāja barahi parichana calim.
janu bigasim rabi udaya kanaka paṅkaja kalim. 132.

131-132. Hearing those magnificent songs, Uma (Parvati), Rama (Laxmi) and other divine consorts of various Gods became exhilarated. All of them assumed the illusive

forms of womenfolk of the city and went to the venue of the marriage ceremony to participate in it.¹ (131)

They arranged the paraphernalia for doing the auspicious Arti of the groom (Sri Ram) and proceeded to meet him². They are so happy and jubilant that they resemble the buds of the golden lotus that open up their petals at the sight of the rising sun³. (132)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 321 says that the Gods assumed different human forms and went to participate in the marriage ceremony; (b) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 322 say that the divine consorts of the Gods, such as Parvati, Laxmi and others also assumed the form of womenfolk and went to attend the marriage of Sita and Ram. Sita's mother welcomed them all warmly though she could not know who they actually were.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317. The 'Aarti' is a process whereby lighted oil lamps are arranged on a platter and moved in a clockwise manner in front of the honoured guest. This is a traditional gesture done as a ritual to welcome the guest as well as to wish him all good luck. In this case of course the honoured guest is Lord Ram, the groom.

³A similar comparison is made by Tulsidas in his book Kavitaawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 22, line no. 3.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 318.]

नख सिख सुंदर राम रूप जब देखहिं ।
सब इंद्रिन्ह महुँ इंद्र बिलोचन लेखहिं ॥133॥
परम प्रीति कुलरीति करहिं गज गामिनि ।
नहिं अघाहिं अनुराग भाग भरि भामिनि ॥134॥

nakha sikha sundara rāma rūpa jaba dēkhahim.
saba indrinha maham'indra bilōcana lēkhahim. 133.
parama prīti kularīti karahim gaja gāmini.
nahim aghāhim anurāga bhāga bhari bhāmini. 134.

133-134. When they (the womenfolk of Janakpur) observe the elegant, fascinating, magnificent and stupendous beauty and charm of the form of Lord Sri Ram, from his toe-nails to the tuft of hairs on his head, they behold it spellbound, enthralled and mesmerised by the beauty of the sight. At that time they hoped that their bodies should have had thousands of eyes, just like Indra has, so that they could have watched the unparalleled enchanting sight of Lord Ram's beautiful form with all those extra eyes and enjoy it thousands of times more than what they can do now with merely two eyes at present.

[The human body has only two eyes. So these women praised Indra, the king of Gods, who is believed to have thousands of eyes in the form of 'holes' in his body. They hoped that if they too had as many eyes on their bodies as does Indra, then they too would have been able to see the wonderful form of the Lord with all these thousand eyes simultaneously, and enjoy thousands of time more than they are able to do at present with merely two natural eyes.] (133)

Those women walked gracefully with an elephant-like majestic gait. They were overwhelmed with the warmth of love and affection heaving inside their hearts. They felt extremely fortunate and blessed.

They perform all the rituals warmly and affectionately according to the established traditions of the clan, but do not feel satisfied or done with it. [That is, they perform the rituals again and again repeatedly, so that they are able to spend some more time with Sri Ram.] (134)

[Note—A similar view is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 317. These lines describe how the different Gods felt happy to have many unconventional eyes because now they could see the beautiful form of Lord Ram as a groom with so many additional eyes:—

“Lord Shiva became so enthralled by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram that he felt extremely glad that he has fifteen eyes. (Shiva has five heads, and each head has three eyes—two conventional eyes and one eye of wisdom located in the center of his forehead. Hence, 5 heads x 3 eyes = 15 eyes in all.)

When Lord Vishnu saw Ram he too was enthralled along with Laxmi, his divine consort who herself is an image of beauty and charm.

The creator Brahma too was enthralled when he saw the enchanting image of Lord Ram, and he regretted that he has only eight eyes. (Brahma has 4 heads by which he pronounced the 4 Vedas, and each head has 2 eyes. Hence, 4 heads x 2 eyes each = 8 eyes in all. He compares himself with Lord Shiva who has 15 eyes, and thus could enjoy the wonderful sight of Lord Ram more than Brahma who has merely 8 eyes.)

Lord Kartikeya, the commander of the army of Gods, thought himself to be luckier than Brahma as he could see the wonderful form of Lord Ram one-and-a-half times more clearly than the latter. (Kartikeya has 12 eyes, which are 1½ times more than that possessed by Brahma who has only 8 eyes.)

Meanwhile, Indra, the king of Gods, watches Lord Ram with his thousand eyes (in the form of holes on his body). He now feels that the curse of sage Gautam has become his blessing because of the fact that he can enjoy the fabulous form of Lord Ram thousand of times more intensely and with more clarity than the other Gods.

When the other Gods look at Indra they feel envious of him, and praise him at the same time, for he is able to see Lord Ram with thousand eyes, whereas they can't. The Gods say that no one is more fortunate than Indra today.

So, all the different Gods felt exhilarated and fortunate as they happily watched Lord Ram. Similarly, the two sides, i.e. king Dasrath's and king Janak's sides, too felt extremely happy and joyful (like the Gods) as they watched, fascinated, the magnificently charming image of the Lord.”

The story of how Indra got these thousand eyes is linked to the story of sage Gautam's wife Ahilya turning into stone. Briefly it is narrated as a note to verse no. 40 of this book Janki Mangal.]

नेगचारु कहँ नागरि गहरु न लावहिं।
निरखि निरखि आनंदु सुलोचनि पावहिं॥135॥
करि आरती निछावरि बरहि निहारहिं।
प्रेम मगन प्रमदागन तन न सँभारहिं॥136॥

nēgacāru kaham̐ nāgari gaharu na lāvahim̐.
nirakhi nirakhi ānandu sulōcani pāvahim̐. 135.
kari āratī nichāvāri barahi nihārahim̐.
prēma magana pramadāgana tana na sam̐bhārahim̐. 136.

135-136. Those clever maidens of the city do not delay in doing the various rites and completing all the necessary formalities. Those women with beautiful eyes get immense joy and delight by repeatedly watching Lord Sri Ram. (135)

After performing the ceremonial Arti (showing of small lighted lamps) and making offerings (generally involving sprinkling of coloured rice grains around the object of Arti; here, around Sri Ram), they became so overwhelmed with lovable emotions that they lost control over their bodies (i.e. they became unaware of their surroundings as they were spellbound by the captivating and charming image of Sri Ram as a groom). (136)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317—to Doha no. 318; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 319.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 2-4.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 108.

Refer also to Chanda no. 17 below that builds up on these two verses.]

नहिं तन सम्हारहिं छबि निहारहिं निमिष रिपु जनु रनु जए ।
चक्रवै लोचन राम रूप सुराज सुख भोगी भए ।।
तब जनक सहित समाज राजहि उचित रुचिरासन दए ।
कौसिक बसिष्ठहि पूजि पूजे राउ दै अंबर नए ।। 17 ।।

chanda:

nahim tana samhārahim chabi nihārahim nimiṣa ripu janu ranu ja'ē.
cakravai lōcana rāma rūpa surāja sukha bhōgī bha'ē.
taba janaka sahita samāja rājahi ucita rucirāsana da'ē.
kausika basiṣṭhahi pūji pūjē rā'u dai ambara na'ē. 17.

Chanda 17. They are unable to exercise control over their bodies (as they have become very excited and ecstatic). They intently observe the beautiful image of Sri Ram. It looks as if they have won over the enemy represented by their eyelids in the battle-field. [That is, they stare unblinkingly at Sri Ram, being most enchanted and mesmerised by his stupendous beauty. They have 'conquered their eyelids' in the sense that they stopped them from closing and opening repeatedly as they gaze fixedly at the enchanting image of the Lord.]¹

It appears that an emperor symbolized by their eyes has conquered an enemy represented by the constant blinking of the eyelids so that these womenfolk could now enjoy unhindered the happiness and prosperity of a beautiful kingdom symbolized by the enchanting image of Lord Ram as a groom.

Then king Janak gave suitable and honourable seats to Dasrath and his companions. [That is, he seated Dasrath and his party according to their position in the royal and social hierarchy.]

Thereafter, he worshipped sages Kaushik and Vashistha. Then he worshipped the king (Dasrath), and offered them all new garments and ceremonial robes.² (Chanda no. 17)

[Note—¹Refer verse nos. 135-136 above.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 2-4.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.]

देत अरघ रघुबीरहि मंडप लै चलीं ।
 करहिं सुमंगल गान उमगि आनंद अलीं ॥137॥
 बर बिराज मंडप महँ बिस्व बिमोहइ ।
 ऋतु बसंत बन मध्य मदनु जनु सोहइ ॥138॥

dēta aragha raghubīrahi maṇḍapa lai calīm.
 karahīm sumaṅgala gāna umagi ānamḍa alīm. 137.
 bara birāja maṇḍapa maham̐ bisva bimōha'i.
 ṛtu basanta bana madhya madanu janu sōha'i. 138.

137-138. Some of these maidens (who were friends of Sita) offered libations to Raghubir (Sri Ram) while they brought him gladly to the platform where the marriage was to be formalised¹. They are very excited and overwhelmed with surging emotions of warmth and exhilaration. They sing beautiful, melodious, auspicious and felicitous songs². (137)

The groom, Lord Sri Ram, is present in the pavilion, and his dignified and elegant presence seems to enchant and attract the attention of the whole world. He looks fabulous and as vibrantly magnificent and adorable as Kamdeo-cupid does in the center of a garden or forest during the spring season.

[In this imagery, the decorated platform where the marriage was to be solemnized is compared to a beautiful garden, and Lord Ram who is seated in the center of it is compared to Kamdeo-cupid, the God of charm, magnificence and beauty.] (138)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 319.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 319; (b) Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line no. 2.]

कुल बिबहार बेद बिधि चाहिय जहँ जस ।
 उपरोहित दोउ करहिं मुदित मन तहँ तस ॥139॥
 बरहि पूजि नृप दीन्ह सुभग सिंहासन ।
 चलीं दुलहिनिहि ल्याइ पाइ अनुसासन ॥140॥

kula bibahāra bēda bidhi cāhiya jaham̐ jasa.
 uparōhita dō'u karahīm mudita mana taham̐ tasa. 139.
 barahi pūji nṛpa dīnha subhaga sinhāsana.
 calīm dulaḥinihi lyā'i pā'i anusāsana. 140.

139-140. Whatever was required to be done and whichever rite was needed to be performed according to traditions of the clan and the edicts of the Vedas, both the officiating royal priests (Vashistha and Shatanand) did them very cheerfully¹. (139)

The king (Janak) worshipped the groom and gave him a beautiful throne to sit upon², while the maidens went to fetch the bride on getting the instructions to do so³. (140)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322; (c) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323; and (d) Chanda line no. 1 of stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 319.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8, and Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 322.]

जुबति जुत्थ मँ सीय सुभाइ बिराजइ ।
उपमा कहत लजाइ भारती भाजइ ।।141।।
दुलह दुलहिनिन्ह देखि नारि नर हरषहिं ।
छिनु छिनु गान निसान सुमन सुर बरषहिं ।।142।।

jubati jut'tha maham̐ sīya subhā'i birāja'i.
upamā kahata lajā'i bhārati bhāja'i. 141.
dulaha dulaheininha dēkhi nāri nara haraṣahim̐.
chinu chinu gāna nisāna sumana sura baraṣahim̐. 142.

141-142. [After the groom, Lord Sri Ram, was duly honoured and seated, the bride, Sita, was summoned¹. She came to the place of the marriage rites surrounded by her female companions and friends. These two verses describe the sight of Sita as she came to the spot where the rites were to be performed, and the celebrations that accompanied her arrival.]

Sita looks naturally adorable and beautiful in the midst of a crowd of womenfolk who surround her from all sides².

Goddess Saraswati finds herself incompetent to describe the majesty and grandeur of that moment as she cannot find adequate words (though she is supposed to be the patron goddess of language and speech). So she feels ashamed and mortified at her ineptness and makes good her escape silently to avoid embarrassment. [In other words, Sita looked so magnificent and fabulous at that time that even the goddess of speech failed to find words to describe her beauty and charm. So she hastily escaped from the site to avoid laughter and ridicule. This was because all other goddesses were also present there³, and it would be a matter of shame not to sing the glory of that occasion when all other womenfolk were trying their best to sing melodious songs befitting that divine moment.] (141)

Men and women folk became jubilant and thrilled as they watched the groom and the bride sitting together. They sang felicitous songs every now and then⁴. The Gods too sang merrily, beating their musical drums and showering flowers from the sky every now and then⁵. (142)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 322.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 322—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 322.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 313; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 325.

⁵Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (b) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 323; (c) Chaupai line no. 7 and Chanda stanza no. 1 that precede Doha no. 324; (d) Doha no. 324 itself.

Refer also to: (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 105-106, and (iii) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 17-17.]

लै लै नाउँ सुआसिनि मंगल गावहिं ।
कुँवर कुँवरि हित गनपति गौर पुजावहिं ।।143।।
अग्नि थापि मिथिलेस कुसोदक लीन्हेउ ।
कन्या दान बिधान संकलप कीन्हेउ ।।144।।

lai lai nā'um̐ su'āsini maṅgala gāvahiṁ.
kum̐vara kum̐vari hita ganapati gaura puṭāvahiṁ. 143.
agini thāpi mithilēsa kusōdaka līnhē'u.
kan'yā dāna bidhāna saṅkalapa kīnhē'u. 144.

143-144. Married ladies of the city sing auspicious songs using the name of the groom and the bride (i.e. Lord Sri Ram and Sita respectively)¹. They cheerfully make the prince (Sri Ram) and the princess (Sita) worship Lord Ganesh and Gauri (Parvati) for the couple's welfare and happiness². (143)

The king of Mithila (Janak) established (i.e. kindled) the sacred fire and took water and Kush grass in his hands to prepare for the ritual called 'Kanya Daan' (wherein the bride's father gives away his daughter in marriage to the groom in the witness of the Fire God)³. (144)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323.

Earlier also, in verse no. 114 of this book Janki Mangal, there is mention of worship of Gauri and Ganesh. Gauri is the consort of Lord Shiva and the Mother Goddess, and Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiva. Ganesh is worshipped at the beginning of all religious ceremonies or at the beginning of any enterprise to invoke his blessings for their success.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 323 which says that the Fire God manifested himself to accept the offerings made by Janak; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-8, as well as Chanda stanza nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 324 describe in detail the process by which Janak gave Sita to Ram in marriage.

The ritual is called 'Kanya Daan'. It is the final moment during a marriage ceremony when the bride's father formally hands over his daughter to the groom with the Fire God as witness, and the groom formally accepts her as part of his own family with the promise that he will take care of her.

The word 'Kanya' means an unmarried girl, and the word 'Daan' literally means giving away selflessly and in a manner such that the giver forgoes all his claims over the thing given. In other words, the father gives his daughter to the groom in a selfless manner, and from that instant relinquishes his rights over her. The girl's father cannot

claim her to be a member of his family from the moment she is given in marriage to the groom—i.e. he forgoes his right to call her a member of his clan or family. This is the reason the girl has to assume the surname of her groom's family to indicate that from the moment of the 'Kanya Daan' ritual she has assumed a totally new identity and family. She no longer belongs to her father's family because she has been virtually given as a 'gift' ('Daan') to her husband by her father and mother.

Since 'Daan' is a one-way transfer of anything that is given away as an honourable gift, with nothing expected in return, the bride's father does not expect anything from the groom or his family for giving them his daughter.

This is also an obvious reason why making the wife suffer and forcing her to go back to her father's house is an unpardonable sin because at the time of accepting her as a 'Daan' or 'gift', the groom had made the Fire God a witness that he willingly accepts the responsibility of taking care of the bride and treat her respectfully as part of his family. Not to do so subsequently is therefore an unforgivable sin.

The entire process has been described in sage Valmiki's 'Ramayana', 1/73/25-29. Let us see briefly what it says—

"Then (after formal rituals started and Lord Ram was duly honoured and seated), Sita was fully decorated and brought to the venue. She was made to sit with Lord Ram, in the front of the sacred fire. Janak then solemnly said to Ram, 'Sita is my daughter. She is being given to you so that you two can perform various religious deeds and fulfill the different obligations ordained by the laws of Dharma. Please accept her. You be blessed. Take her hands in your hands (i.e. accept her). She will be loyal to you ('Pativrataa'), she will bring good fortunes and luck for you ('Saubhagyawati'), and she will live like a shadow for you ('Chaaya'; i.e. she will always follow you, stay with you, and protect you).'

Saying this, king Janak pronounced sacred Mantras and dropped (sprinkled) the consecrated water (that he had been holding, along with the Kush grass, in his cupped palms). At that time, the gods and sages blessed them, exclaiming 'Glory to you'. The gods played their kettle-drums and showered flowers from the sky. In this way, Janak gifted his daughter (Sita) to Ram."

संकल्पि सिय रामहि समरपी सील सुख सोभामई ।
जिमि संकरहि गिरिराज गिरिजा हरिहि श्री सागर दई ॥
सिंदूर बंदन होम लावा होन लागी भौवरी ।
सिल पोहनी करि मोहनी मनहर्षो मूरति साँवरी ॥१८॥

chanda:

saṅkalpi siya rāmaḥi samarapī sīla sukha sōbhāma'ī.
jimi saṅkarahi girirāja girijā harihi śrī sāgara da'ī.
sindūra bandana hōma lāvā hōna lāgī bhāmvarīm.
sila pōhanī kari mōhanī manaharyō mūrati sāmvarīm. 18.

Chanda 18. The king made a solemn vow and formally handed over Sita—who had good virtues and characters, was the provider of all happiness, joy and comforts, and was most adorable and magnificent—to Sri Ram just as the king of the mountains called Giriraj had handed over Girija (Parvati) to Lord Shiva, and the Ocean had given away Laxmi (the goddess of wealth) to Hari (Vishnu) at the time of their respective marriages¹.

[Then the different marriage rituals were performed in succession as follows—] The vermilion was consecrated and put on the forehead of the bride by the groom². Rice flakes were scattered before the couple as well as the sacred fire before these flakes were offered to the sacrificial fire itself as an offering³. Then the ritual of ‘Bhanwari’ (circumambulation around the sacred fire by the married couple) was completed⁴.

After that, the ‘Shil Pohani’ ritual was done (in which solid turmeric is crushed on a grinding stone or mortar with the help of a pestle)⁵. At that time, Sri Ram’s enchanting and magnificent dark-complexioned image stole the mind and heart of all those present⁶. (Chanda no. 18)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 325.

³Refer: Parvati Mangal, verse no. 80 that narrate a similar ritual during the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 325.

⁵Refer: Parvati Mangal, verse no. 80. The book ‘Parvati Mangal’ describes the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 4-6 that precede Doha no. 325.]

एहि बिधि भयो बिबाह उछाह तिहूँ पुर।
देहिं असीम मुनीस सुमन बरषहिं सुर।।145।।
मन भावत बिधि कीन्ह मुदित भामिनि भई।
बर दुलहिनिहि लवाइ सखीं कोहबर गई।।146।।

ēhi bidhi bhayō bibāha uchāha tihūṁ^ṁ pura.
dēhiṁ aśīma munīsa sumana baraṣahiṁ sura. 145.
mana bhāvata bidhi kīnha mudita bhāmini bha’īṁ.
bara dulahinihi lavā’i sakhīṁ kōhabara ga’īṁ. 146.

145-146. In this way, the marriage rituals were completed with full dignity. Happiness, cheer, joy, exhilaration and ecstasy spread in all the directions of the world in great abundance¹. The sages and seers gave their blessings to the couple, while the Gods showered flowers from the sky². (145)

Seeing that the creator has fully satisfied the desire of their hearts (as they had all wanted Lord Ram to marry Sita), the women folk felt exceedingly happy and contented³.

After that, the companions of Sita took the bride and the groom to the ‘Kohabar’ (i.e. the room in the house of the bride where the clan’s deities are placed and worshipped)⁴. (146)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1, line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 325.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 324; (b) Doha no. 324 itself; (c) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (d) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 94.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324.

⁴*Kohabar* is a ritual when both the groom and the bride are taken to the worship room in the bride's house to worship the family deities of the bride. At that time, the newly wed couples are surrounded by close family members of the bride.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 327.]

निरखि निछावर करहि बसन मनि छिनु छिनु।
जाइ न बरनि बिनोद मोदमय सो दिनु।।147।।
सिय भ्राताके समय भोम तहँ आयउ।
दुरीदुरा करि नेगु सुनात जनायउ।।148।।

nirakhi nichāvara karahi basana mani chinu chinu.
jā'i na barani binōda mōdamaya sō dinu. 147.
siya bhrātākē samaya bhōma taham āya'u.
durīdurā kari nēgu sunāta janāya'u. 148.

147-148. They (the companions of Sita as well as other ladies of the royal household and the city) look intently and repeatedly at him (Lord Sri Ram), so fascinated were they at the charming image of the Lord. They were so overwhelmed with joy and happiness that they liberally gave away as gift whatever they could lay their hands upon, such as different types of robes and clothes as well as gems and jewels¹. One cannot describe that day in which wave after huge wave of warmth, joy, happiness and celebrations surged ahead and heaved in great abundance². (147)

When the necessity was felt for the presence of Sita's brother during the course of the rituals, Mars (considered to be the son of earth) appeared personally in an illusive form and completed all the ritualistic formalities, thereby proclaiming (making it known) his blessings for the couple and his promise that he will always be favourable to them³. (148)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 4, and stanza no. 4 that precede Doha no. 327.

³Usually *Mars* is deemed to be a malignant planet that is the cause of much grief to the living being. His coming personally disguised as Sita's brother to bless Ram and Sita shows that he vows to protect them at all times in the future.

It is believed in mythology that Mars is the son of Mother Earth. Sita was produced from earth. So Mars was right in assuming the form of Sita's brother as both had Mother Earth as their parent.

Mars appeared in a human form but cast his magical spell of illusion upon the assembly so that no one could recognise him and know his true identity. The magical charm that mesmerised the people at that moment was so intense that no one could understand the import of this development. Everyone forgot for the moment that Sita had no brother, and therefore the person disguised as the brother must be some manifested form a God or some other divine Being.

In Padma Puran, Paatal Khand, Ram Ashwamedh, 11/27—30/58-64 it is clearly written that 'Laxmi-nidhi' was Sita's brother, and he was present to complete all the

rituals required to be done by the bride's brother. But this was no ordinary marriage. It was a reiteration of the cosmic union of the Supreme Being and his Shakti, albeit in its manifested form. Mars decided that if all the gods and goddesses could participate in disguised forms in this divine marriage of the Lord and his Shakti, then why should he remain behind, and why should he not too sneak in secretly in a disguise. Mars thought the matter over and decided to become Sita's brother. No one would point a finger at him and accuse him of taking a wrong role—because he was born from Earth just like Sita, and therefore she is deemed to be his sister! So everything would be okay.

In other words, Mars sneaked in quietly and remained invisible to the ordinary people who thought that Laxmi-nidhi was performing all the rituals needed to be done by the bride's brother. He stood alongside Laxmi-nidhi and participated in the rituals. No one except Lord Ram and the wise sages and the gods could know this trick. Remember—all the gods and goddesses had played the same trick to enjoy being a part of the divine celebrations. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 which tell us that the different senior gods had assumed human forms to participate in the marriage; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 322 says the same thing about goddesses; and (d) Doha no. 323 that says that the Fire God manifested himself to accept the offerings, and the Vedas too manifested themselves to tell about the various steps in the rituals and guide the officiating priests.]

चतुर नारि बर कुँवरिहि रीति सिखावहिं ।
 देहिं गारि लहकौरि समौ सुख पावहिं ।।149 ।।
 जुआ खेलावन कौतुक कीन्ह सयानिन्ह ।
 जीति हारि मिस देहिं गारि दुहु रानिन्ह ।।150 ।।

catura nāri bara kum̐varihi rīti sikhāvahiṁ.
 dēhiṁ gāri lahakauri samau sukha pāvahiṁ. 149.
 ju'ā khēlāvana kautuka kīnha sayāninha.
 jīti hāri misa dēhiṁ gāri duhu rāninha. 150.

149-150. Clever women teach the clan's traditions to both the groom and the bride. During the 'Lahakori' ritual, these women crack jokes with each other and tease the newly-wed couple with taunting remarks and songs that have sarcastic lyrics, deriving immense pleasure from the laughter that accompanies such remarks and the discomfiture that it cause to the couple¹. (149)

During the 'dice playing' ritual, the clever women use the ploy of losing and winning the game to pass unsavoury and taunting remarks at the two queens (i.e. at the mothers of Sri Ram and Sita—Kaushalya and Sunaina respectively)². (150)

[Note—¹The *Lahakori* ritual is one in which both the bride and the groom are made to feed each other sweetened curd and other sweets using their fingers as spoons, while the ladies surrounding them pass lewd remarks at the couple and poke fun at them, making them blush. It is a rite aimed at overcoming their inhibitions and making them informal with each other.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 2, line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 327.

²The *game of dice* is another such ritual that helps to create a jovial atmosphere of laughter, bonhomie and informality. It is done to break the so-called barrier of formalities and the wall of protocol between the bride and groom and their respective families.

During this rite, the ladies split into two groups, one siding with the groom and the other with the bride. The game is played in such a manner that both the sides win and lose one after another. A lot of jokes and taunting remarks are made during the process, inciting a lot of laughter and mirth.

This ritual, along with the Lahakori rite, tends to bring the two families closer together in an informal way by poking jokes, making fun of each other, and adopting mockery and mimicking as a tool to create an informal and genial atmosphere of bonhomie and friendship. It removes the last vestiges of stiff-upper lip environment of solemnity and formality, and replaces it with close informal ties. It must be noted that prior to these two rituals, the two families, i.e. that of the bride as well as the groom, were alien to each other, not knowing each other's customs and norms. Now with so much laughter and jokes flying around, the stiffness of a formal ceremony is done away with, and it is replaced with an informal atmosphere of friendship and goodwill.]

सीय मातु मन मुदित उत्तरति आरति ।
को कहि सकइ आनंद मगन भइ भारति ।।151 ।।
जुबति जूथ रनिवास रहस बस एहि बिधि ।
देखि देखि सिय राम सकल मंगल निधि ।।152 ।।

siya mātu mana mudita utāraṭi āraṭi.
kō kahi saka'i ānanda magana bha'i bhāraṭi. 151.
jubati jūtha ranivāsa rahasa basa ēhi bidhi.
dēkhi dēkhi siya rāma sakala maṅgala nidhi. 152.

151-152. The mind and heart ('Mana') of Sita's mother became very exhilarated as she performed the Arti (of the couple)¹. [Sita's mother did the Arti to bless the couple, Lord Ram and Sita, as well as to wish them good in future. The light of the lamps is symbolic of the lighted path that stands for a bright future that is wished for the person to whom the Arti is shown.]

Tulsidas wonders—'Who can describe the exuberance, the warmth, the intensity of happiness, joy and delight that overflowed on that occasion? Even Saraswati (the goddess of speech) became overwhelmed with joy and delight so much so that she too became dumbfounded and speechless.'²

[In other words, the atmosphere at that time was fully charged with the emotions of love, affection, warmth and happiness that filled it and radiated in all the directions. These emotions were of such intensity and so divine that one could experience them and enjoy them but not able to describe them in words just like a man eating some delicious food enjoys the taste but is unable to describe it in words which would make others experience and enjoy the same taste as he did while he was eating the delicacy.] (151)

In this way, the group of young women as well as the entire bride's household got overwhelmed with joy and happiness as they watched, mesmerised and enthralled, the glamorous, majestic and magnificent image of Lord Ram and Sita standing together, an image that was like a treasury of all happiness, auspiciousness, good fortunes, luck and well-being ('Mangal Nidhi')². (152)

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 136 above along with its accompanying note.

²Refer verse no. 141 above along with its accompanying note.

³Refer verse nos. 130, 134, 136, and Chanda no. 17 above along with their accompanying notes.]

मंगल निधान बिलोकि लोयन लाय लूटति नागरीं ।
दइ जनक तिनिहुँ कुँवरि कुँवर बिबाह सुनि आनँद भरीं ।।
कल्यान मो कल्यान पाइ बितान छबि मन मोहइ ।
सुरधेनु ससि सुरमनि सहित मानहुँ कलप तरु सोहई ।।19 ।।

chanda:

maṅgala nidhāna bilōki lōyana lāya lūṭati nāgarīm.
da'i janaka tinihum' kum'vari kum'vara bibāha suni ānam'da bharīm.
kalyāna mō kalyāna pā'i bitāna chabi mana mōha'i.
suradhēnu sasi suramani sahita mānahum' kalapa taru sōha'ī. 19.

Chanda 19. Watching Sri Ram and Sita, who are like a treasury of auspiciousness, good fortunes and all-round welfare, the clever women are thoroughly enjoying the benefit of having their eyes¹.

Janak gave his other three princesses in marriage to the remaining three princes. [Sita had one other sister named Urmila. She was married to Laxman. Janak's brother, named Kushdhvaj or Kushketu, had two daughters—Mandavi and Srutikirti. They were married to Bharat and Shatrughan respectively.]²

Hearing this excellent news that all the four daughters have been married to the four brothers, the subjects of the kingdom were overjoyed and delighted. [They had prayed that at least Sita should be married to Lord Ram. So when they learnt that all of them have been married simultaneously to the four brothers, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, their joy and happiness knew no bounds. They had expected only one reward, and now they are getting their hands full of rewards. The citizens could not sufficiently thank their good luck and the gods who not only listened to their prayers to get Sita married to Lord Ram, but went many steps ahead to reward them with happy tidings they had never imagined in their dreams that all the four princesses would be married to the four wonderful princes.]³

In this way, good tidings and happy events multiplied manifold times, and these made the marriage pavilion look all the more energized, fantastic, exuberant, colourful and vibrant. The marriage pavilion looked so wonderful⁴ with the three couples present together in it as if the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree of Gods) is standing proudly and majestically alongside the Kamdhenu (the all wish-fulfilling cow of Gods), the Moon God, and the Chintamani (the magical gem that removes all worries)⁵.

[Here, the Kalpa Tree is Lord Ram, and the other three divine entities such as Kamdhenu cow, the Moon God and the Chintamani are represented by Ram's three brothers, viz. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.

This stanza can also be interpreted to mean that the Kalpa Tree stands for the pair of Ram and Sita, and the other three entities such as the Kamdhenu cow, the Moon God and the Chintamani stand respectively for the other three couples, viz. Laxman and Urmila, Bharat and Mandavi, and Shatrughan and Srutikirti.] (Chanda no. 19)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326; (b) Chanda stanza no. 1, line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 327; (c) Chanda stanza no. 2, line nos. 2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 327; (d) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 105-106, and 108.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 2, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 325—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

(ii) However, in Geetawali, Baal Kand, there is mention of only Laxman's marriage to Urmila in verse no. 107, and a passing reference to the marriage of all the four brothers in verse no. 104, stanza no. 3.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223; and (b) from Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 1-4—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 312 that reiterate precisely the same idea.

⁴The magnificence and glory of the marriage platform after Lord Ram came there and the rituals for the marriage began is described succinctly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, in the entire Chanda that precedes Doha no. 320.

⁵Refer: Verse no. 153-155 below.]

जनक अनुज तनया दोउ परम मनोरम ।
जेठि भरत कहँ ब्याहि रूप रति सय सम ॥153 ॥
सिय लघु भगिनि लखन कहँ रूप उजागरि ।
लखन अनुज श्रुतकीरति सब गुन आगरि ॥154 ॥

janaka anuja tanayā dō'u parama manōrama.
jēṭhi bharata kaham̐ byāhi rūpa rati saya sama. 153.
siya laghu bhagini lakhana kahum̐ rūpa ujāgari.
lakhana anuja śrutakīrati saba guna āgari.154.

153-154. Janak's younger brother (Kushdhvaj) had two daughters who were most beautiful and charming. Out of them, the elder one (Mandavi)—who was like hundreds of Ratis in beauty—was married to Bharat. [Rati is the divine consort of Kamdeo-cupid; she is symbolic of stupendous beauty.] (153)

Sita's younger sister (Urmila)—who was very famous owing to her radiant beauty and charm—was married to Laxman. And Laxman's younger brother (Shatrughan) was married to Srutikirti who was a treasury of all noble virtues and qualities. (154)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 2, line no. 2—to stanza no. 3, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 325.]

राम बिबाह समान बिबाह तीनिउ भए ।
जीवन फल लोचन फल बिधि सब कहँ दए ॥155 ॥
दाइज भयउ बिबिध बिधि जाइ न सो गनि ।
दासी दास बाजि गज हेम बसन मनि ॥156 ॥

rāma bibāha samāna bibāha tīni'u bha'ē.
jīvana phala lōcana phala bidhi saba kaham̐ da'ē. 155.

dā'ija bhaya'u bibidha bidhi jā'i na sō gani.
dāsī dāsa bāji gaja hēma basana mani. 156.

155-156. The other three marriages of the three brothers of Lord Ram were solemnised in the same manner as that of the Lord himself¹. In this way, the creator rewarded everyone with the fruit of getting this life as well as of having eyes (eyesight)². (155)

Various types of marriage gifts (dowry) such as male and female servants/attendants, elephants and horses, gold (in the form of ornaments and other things), beautiful clothes, wearing apparels, garments and robes, as well as priceless gems and jewels were given by Janak. These gifts were so immense that it is not possible to either describe them or list them.³ (156)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 222; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (c) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 310; (d) Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 326. and (b) Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.]

दान मान परमान प्रेम पूरन किए।
समधी सहित बरात बिनय बस करि लिए॥157॥
गे जनवासे राउ संगु सुत सुतबहु।
जनु पाए फल चारि सहित साधन चहु॥158॥

dāna māna paramāna prēma pūrana ki'ē.
samadhī sahita barāta binaya basa kari li'ē. 157.
gē janavāsē rā'u saṅgu suta sutabahu.
janu pā'ē phala cāri sahita sādhana cahu. 158.

157-158. By making immense gifts and showing warmth, honour and respect to all the guests, king Janak managed to endear everyone in the marriage party, making them feel at home, happy and cheerful. He showed so much genuine warmth and friendship that everyone, including the in-law's family (i.e. king Dasrath and his kith and kin), felt fully contented and grateful to him. Janak left no stones unturned to make the guests contented and happy, and they fully appreciated his noble gestures and sincerity of approach. Hence, Janak was able to win over their hearts with his dedicated service, politeness, all possible humility, simplicity and prayerful demeanours that he could muster.¹ (157)

Then the king (Dasrath), accompanied by his four sons and daughter-in-laws, went to the place where he had been lodged². It appeared that he has successfully done the four 'Sadhans' which helped him to obtain the four legendary great 'fruits' or rewards³.

[The 'Sadhans' are the four noble paths, ways, means etc. that one follows to achieve desired results in any endeavour. When these four Sadhans are done properly, the person is rewarded by the 'four great fruits'. These 'fruits' are the following—(i) Artha or financial well-being, (ii) Dharma or being able to successfully fulfill all requirements

of auspiciousness and righteousness; (iii) Kaam or being able to fulfill all desires and wishes, and (iv) Moksha or being able to attain emancipation and salvation for the soul.

The four Sadhans are—(i) ‘Bhakti’ or devotion and dedication for the Lord God, (ii) ‘Tapasya’ or doing penances and observing austerities, (iii) ‘Shradha’ or having respect and honour for the Lord God and the path of Dharma, and (iv) ‘Seva’ or doing selfless service.

In this verse, the four ‘Sadhans’ refer to his four sons, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, while the four ‘fruits’ refer to their respective brides, i.e. Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Srurkriti. Well, every father would want that he gets a good bride for his sons, and when this happens he feels very happy and fulfilled. This was the case with Dasrath too.] (158)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 as well as Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 326. Janak even asked for forgiveness if there was any deficiency in his service for the guests, or if he may have transgressed certain norms or shown undue haste in his attempt to please them—for he had no intention to cause any sort of annoyance or embarrassment to anyone, but he was merely trying to do his best to make them feel happy and comfortable.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (b) Doha no. 329.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 325.]

चहु प्रकार जेवनार भई बहु भौतिन्ह ।
भोजन करत अवधपति सहित बरातिन्ह ।।159 ।।
देहि गारि बर नारि नाम लै दुहु दिसि ।
जेवत बढ्यो अनंद सुहावनि सो निसि ।।160 ।।

cahu prakāra jēvanāra bha'ī bahu bhām'tinha.
bhōjana karata avadhapati sahita barātinha. 159.
dēhi gāri bara nāri nāma lai duhu disi.
jēnvata barha'īō ananda suhāvani sō nisi. 160.

159-160. Sumptuous food consisting of fine delectable dishes of all the four major categories of food that covered all shades of taste¹ were prepared with great care for the grand feast that was organized for the grooms and the marriage party. The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath), along with the rest of the members of the royal entourage, began eating and enjoying the food.² (159)

Beautiful women merrily began singing melodious songs that contained lyrics teasing the members of the groom's side as well as the bride's side, amusing the guests and the hosts alike, and evoking mirth and laughter in the entire assembly³. Everyone was thoroughly enjoying the moment as they ate the wonderful food that was served. The overall environment of bonhomie and the cheerfulness that prevailed at that time made the night appear very pleasant, charming and enjoyable indeed. (160)

[Note—¹The four major categories of food served at the grand feast are as follows—(a) ‘Bhakshya’: that which is eaten by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, e.g. bread, chewing of sugarcane; (b) ‘Bhojya’: that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, e.g. rice, curry; (c) ‘Lehya’: that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (d) ‘Choshya’: that which is sucked e.g. water, milk.

The major types of tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 328 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1, 8; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-5, 8 that precede Doha no. 329.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 329.]

सो निसि सोहावनि मधुर गावति बाजने बाजहिं भले ।
नृप कियो भोजन पान पाइ प्रमोद जनवासेहि चले ।।
नट भाट मागध सूत जाचक जस प्रतापहि बरनहीं ।
सानंद भूसुर बृंद मनि गज देत मन करषै नहीं ।।20 ।।

chanda:

sō nisi sōhāvani madhura gāvati bājanē bājahiṁ bhalē.
nr̥pa kiyō bhōjana pāna pā'i pramōda janavāsēhi calē.
naṭa bhāṭa māgadha sūta jācaka jasa pratāpahi baranahīṁ.
sānanda bhūsura bṛnda mani gaja dēta mana karaṣai nahīṁ. 20.

Chanda 20. That night of the grand feast became memorable as it was exceptionally enjoyable, pleasant and enchanting. The women merrily sang sweet and melodious songs. The best of the musical instruments of the day were being played on that occasion.

Having satisfied himself with food and drink, the king (Dasrath) felt happy and contented. He then proceeded to the place of his lodging¹.

The Nuts (dancers; acrobats), Bhaats (royal bards; minstrels), Magadhs (common bards; lay minstrels), the Suts (heralds) and Yaachaks (the beggars; alm-seekers)—all of them began lauding the great king and praising his glories.

The king on his part never felt hesitant in cheerfully giving away gems and elephants liberally to Brahmins as donation so much so that the more he gave the more he wanted to give.² (Chanda no. 20)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 329 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 331 that describe these events at the time of Dasrath going to his lodging place after the feast; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 340 that describe these events at the time of departure of the groom's party from Janakpur on their home to Ayodhya.]

Departure of Sri Ram's marriage party back for Ayodhya

करि करि बिनय कछुक दिन राखि बरातिन्ह ।
जनक कीन्ह पहुँचाई अगनित भाँतिन्ह ।।161 ।।
प्रात बरात चलिहि सुनि भूपति भामिनि ।

परि न बिरह बस नींद बीति गइ जामिनि ।।162 ।।

kari kari binaya kachuka dina rākhi barātinha.
janaka kīnha pahunāī aganita bhāmītinha. 161.
prāta barāta calihi suni bhūpati bhāmini.
pari na biraha basa nīnda bīti ga'i jāmini. 162.

161-162. [When king Dasrath expressed his desire to return to Ayodhya—] King Janak repeatedly prayed to the groom's party to stay for some more days after the marriage, and they obliged him by prolonging their stay for a few more days while he (Janak) served them in hundreds of ways (i.e. in all possible ways)¹. (161)

But when the news finally came that the groom's party will go back the next morning, the queens in the royal household (of Janak) could not sleep the whole night, dismayed at the inevitable separation and the loneliness that would follow the exit of the guests². (162)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 332 where the same idea is reiterated but with an additional information that when many days passed and Janak was reluctant to allow Dasrath to go back, the two wise sages, Vishwamitra and Shatanand, went to Janak and persuaded him to be practical and let the groom's party go back to its kingdom. A lot many days have already passed, and more delay would jeopardize the administration of both the kingdoms. After all, a 'guest' cannot remain forever in the host's place.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 332; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 334; and (c) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 336.]

खरभर नगर नारि नर बिधिहि मनावहिं ।
बार बार ससुरारि राम जेहि आवहिं ।।163 ।।
सकल चलन के साज जनक साजत भए ।
भाइन्ह सहित राम तब भूप-भवन गए ।।164 ।।

kharabhara nagara nāri nara bidhihi manāvahiṁ.
bāra bāra sasurāri rāma jēhi āvahiṁ. 163.
sakala calana kē sāja janaka sājata bha'ē.
bhā'inha sahita rāma taba bhūpa-bhavana ga'ē. 164.

163-164. There was a tumult in the city (and a pall of gloom descended on it) as soon as this news of the departure of the groom's party spread¹. All the men and women folk of the city prayed to (i.e. requested) the Gods that Sri Ram should come back to his in-law's place again and again in the future. (163)

Janak made all the arrangements for the ceremonial departure of the party with full royal honours². Then Sri Ram, accompanied by his brothers, went to the palace of Janak to take permission to leave³. (164)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 335; (c) Doha no. 337.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 339.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; and (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

सासु उत्तारि आरती करहिं निछावरि।
निरखि निरखि हियँ हरषहिं सूरति साँवरि॥165॥
मागेउ बिदा राम तब सुनि करुना भरीं।
परिहरि सकुच सप्रेम पुलकि पायन्ह परीं॥166॥

sāsu utāri āratī karahim nichāvari.
nirakhi nirakhi hiyam̐ haraṣahim sūratī sām̐vari. 165.
māgē'u bidā rāma taba suni karunā bharim̐.
parihari sakuca saprēma pulaki pāyanha parim̐. 166.

165-166. The mother-in-laws did the Arti and made ceremonial offerings to the groom(s)¹. [All the four brothers, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, had gone to request permission from their mother-in-laws to go back home.]

The queens became exhilarated and thrilled in their hearts as they watched his (Sri Ram's) dark but enchanting image². [Lord Ram had a dark complexion, but inspite of this the Lord looked magnificent, dignified and elegant. His beauteous image or form was so enchanting that the more the queens watched it the more thrilled they became.] (165)

Then Sri Ram asked them to give him permission to leave³. Hearing it, all of them (queens) were overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness of separation⁴. Setting aside all inhibitions and hesitations, they fell down affectionately at his feet and were filled with thrill⁵. (166)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 335.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 337.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 337.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Doha no. 337; (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 338; (d) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

सीय सहित सब सुता सौंपि कर जोरहिं।
बार बार रघुनाथहि निरखि निहोरहिं॥167॥
तात तजिय जनि छोह मया राखबि मन।
अनुचर जानब राउ सहित पुर परिजन॥168॥

sīya sahita saba sutā saumpi kara jōrahim̐.
bāra bāra raghunāthahi nirakhi nihōrahim̐. 167.

tāta tajiya jani chōha mayā rākhabī mana.
anucara jānaba rā'u sahita pura parijana. 168.

167-168. They (Sita's mother and other members of the royal household) formally handed over Sita along with other daughters to their respective husbands¹, and then prayerfully folded their hands as a token for giving permission to leave as well as to show their respect to Lord Ram (and his brothers). They repeatedly glanced at Raghunath (Sri Ram) and prayed to him (167)—‘Oh dear son! Do not ever set aside (i.e. forget) your ties of affection, endearment and love for us. Have mercy, grace and compassion in your heart towards us, and regard the king (Janak) and his subjects as your subordinates.’¹ [The queens were very sad at the time of departure of the bride and the groom. They politely requested Lord Ram and his three brothers not to forget them and the rest of the citizens of Janakpur, and to maintain cordial relationships with them for all times to come.] (168)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 336 along with the accompanying Chanda—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

जन जानि करब सनेह बलि, कहि दीन बचन सुनावहीं ।
अति प्रेम बारहिं बार रानी बालिकन्हि उर लावहीं ।।
सिय चलत पुरजन नारि हय गय बिहँग मृग ब्याकुल भए ।
सुनि बिनय सासु प्रबोधि तब रघुबंस मनि पितु पहिं गए ।।21 ।।

chanda:

jana jāni karaba sanēha bali, kahi dīna bacana sunāvahīm.
ati prēma bārahīm bāra rānī bālikanhi ura lāvahīm.
siya calata purajana nāri haya gaya bihamṅga mṛga byākula bha'ē.
suni binaya sāsū prabōdhi taba raghubansa mani pitu pahīm ga'ē. 21.

Chanda 21. ‘We sincerely request you to be gracious towards these humble princesses, treating them kindly and affectionately as one of your own followers and servers’—saying this, the queens said many humble words of submission and prayer to the four brothers¹.

[The two queens, Janak's queen and his younger brother's queen who were the mothers of the four brides, politely asked the grooms, the four brothers, to take care of their wives with great sensitivity, love and kindness, to forgive them for any mistakes they may make², and to treat the girls affectionately as one of their own family members as they have become their life-partners from now onwards. Though it is obvious that once a girl is married she becomes a part of the groom's family, but the girls's mother still requests the groom to be kind to her as the bride is new to the environment of the in-law's family and may find it a bit difficult to adjust herself. She may be liable to commit errors or become homesick, so the groom is requested to ensure that she feels at home. He must also protect her against all harm because she is totally dependent upon him and is his life-partner, both in joy as well as in sorrow.]

It is a natural reaction of a loving parent when he or she has to permanently part with the girl-child whom he or she had brought up so lovingly from day one of her life till the day of marriage. The mother is naturally worried about the happiness of her daughter because all of a sudden she is transferred to a completely new surrounding of the in-law's household. The bride's mother is also worried because she has no way to find out about the nature and temperament of the groom and his family members. This uncertainty makes her very worried, but there is nothing she can do except to pray and humbly request the groom to be kind, forgiving and accommodating towards his wife.]

The mothers repeatedly clasped their daughters to their hearts with immense affection and love that appeared to spill over and drown everyone³.

When Sita bade them final goodbye and exited her mother's place to accompany Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, all the men, women, horses, elephants, birds and animals of the city (of Janakpur, her native place) became extremely sad, sorrowful and agitated from the agony of separation⁴.

Having heard the prayers of the mother-in-laws, Sri Ram consoled and reassured them in all possible ways⁵, and then he came back to his father's place (with his newly-wed wife Sita) where the marriage party had been lodged⁶.

[It must be noted that Lord Ram is always given precedence over his brothers as he is the eldest amongst them. So though this Chanda starts with the queens requesting the grooms to take proper care of their respective brides, it concludes with mentioning only Sita and Ram. The other brothers and their brides are deemed to have politely followed Lord Ram who took the lead in taking leave of the mother-in-laws on behalf of all of them, and then departing for the place where his father, king Dasrath, was lodged.] (Chanda no. 21)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 334—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 338. However, the specific verses that correspond to the narration in our present Chanda are cited below—

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 336—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 326.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 338.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 337 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 5; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 338; (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 337.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 337.]

परे निसानहि घाउ राउ अवधहिं चले ।
सुर गन बरषहिं सुमन सगुन पावहिं भले ॥169॥
जनक जानकिहि भेटि सिखाइ सिखावन ।
सहित सचिव गुर बंधु चले पहुँचावन ॥170॥

parē nisānahi ghā'u rā'u avadhahim calē.
sura gana baraṣahim sumana saguna pāvahim bhalē. 169.
janaka jānakihi bhēṭi sikhā'i sikhāvana.

sahita saciva gura bandhu calē pahumcāvana. 170.

169-170. Musical instruments such as kettle-drums started playing as the king (Dasrath) made his departure for Ayodhya¹. The Gods rained flowers (from the heaven), and many good and auspicious omens occurred at that time². (169)

Janak met Janki (Sita) and gave her his good counsel³. [Janak, like any other father, was overcome with grief of separation from his beloved daughter. But being wise as he was, he advised Sita and the other daughters about the basic norms that a wife must follow in her life—for example, to serve her husband faithfully and loyally, to do everything possible to make him feel happy and contented, to uphold the dignity of both the families, that of her father's as well as of her in-law's, in every thing she does, and to always follow the laws of Dharma, i.e. the laws of propriety, probity, righteousness and ethics.]

He accompanied the groom's party for quite a distance together with his ministers, Guru and brothers to see them off⁴. (170)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343. However, the specific verses that correspond to the narration in our present verse nos. 169-170 are cited below—

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 339; (b) Line no. 2 of Doha no. 339; (c) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 344.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) line no. 1 of Doha no. 339; (b) Doha no. 347; (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 348.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 339. However, the difference between the narration in our present book 'Janki Mangal' and Ram Charit Manas is that whereas in the former it is Janak who teaches Sita about the basic laws of good conduct that she must remember in her life, it is Sita's mother and her companions who advise her in Ram Charit Manas.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 339—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.]

प्रेम पुलकि कहि राय फिरिय अब राजन ।
करत परस्पर बिनय सकल गुन भाजन ॥171॥
कहेउ जनक कर जोरि कीन्ह मोहि आपन ।
रघुकुल तिलक सदा तुम उथपन थापन ॥172॥

prēma pulaki kahi rāya phiriya aba rājana.
karata paraspara binaya sakala guna bhājana. 171.
kahē'u janaka kara jōri kīnha mōhi āpana.
raghukula tilaka sadā tuma uthapana thāpana. 172.

171-172. The king (Dasrath) was overjoyed and thrilled with affections when he saw the respect and courteousness that Janak had shown towards him and the rest of the bride's party by coming to such a great distance to see them off. So he finally stopped and pleaded with Janak to return to his city.

Dasrath told Janak, 'Oh great king! Please be kind to return now, for you have already come for such a long distance'.

Then both the kings—who were virtually receptacles of virtuous and noble characters—began earnestly requesting and pleading with each other¹. [In other words, while Dasrath pleaded with Janak to return back to his city for he has already come very far, the latter requested the former to let him go some further distance with him. This continued for quite some time and distance.]² (171)

Janak said with folded hands and palms touching each other as a mark of great respect for Dasrath, 'Oh the most exalted and noble one in king Raghu's clan. You have obliged me so much, and have been kind enough to have accepted me as one of your relatives (by accepting my daughters as the brides for your noble sons). You always establish those who have been unfortunate, who are on the verge of ruin and are desperate (i.e. you are very magnanimous, benevolent, beneficent and kind towards those who are junior to you and seek your patronage). I am so privileged to have you as my in-law, and feel so thankful and obliged.'² (172)

[Note—These verses are in continuation of verse no. 170 where it is said that Janak went for quite a distance to see off the groom's party.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 340.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 340 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 where Janak thanks Dasrath and his own good luck, and (b) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343 where Janak has politely prayed to and thanked Lord Ram and his three brothers, as well as their Gurus, sage Vishwamitra and sage Vashistha, before taking his leave and returning to his city.]

बिलग न मानब मोर जो बोलि पढायउँ ।
प्रभु प्रसाद जसु जानि सकल सुख पायउँ ।।173 ।।
पुनि बसिष्ठ आदिक मुनि बंदि महीपति ।
गहि कौसिक के पाइ कीन्ह बिनती अति ।।174 ।।

bilaga na mānaba mōra jō bōli paṭhāya'um.
prabhu prasāda jasu jāni sakala sukha pāya'um. 173.
puni basiṣṭha ādika muni bandi mahīpati.
gahi kausika kē pā'i kīnha binatī ati. 174.

173-174. [Janak continued--] 'I gave you the trouble of having to come here all the way from Ayodhya—but please do not mind my audacity and misdemeanour. By the grace of the Lord, I came to realise your fame and glory (and this was the reason why I took the liberty to give you so much trouble). Indeed it has been my privilege to have you at my place as my honoured guest, and being able to serve you in whatever little way I could. This has given me great happiness and pleasure.'¹

[Janak showed great respect to Dasrath. He said that though under normal circumstance it would have been proper if he had himself gone to Ayodhya to bring him to Janakpur, but it was not advisable as it would have been against established norms and traditions. This is because Dasrath's son Lord Ram was to be married to Janak's daughter Sita, and the bride's father does not go personally to the groom's father to invite him with

the marriage party, but this invitation is sent through a messenger. Now, once this is done and the marriage is over, the two families are bonded together in a standing relationship. With this relationship now formalized and cemented, Janak says that he is so fortunate and lucky to have found a great king of Dasrath's stature as his brotherly king. This marriage has indeed created a rare sort of union and alliance which has brought two renowned and mighty kings of the time together.] (173)

Thereafter, he (Janak) duly worshipped, paid his obeisance to and honoured sage Vashistha and other sages and seers present on the occasion, and then caught hold of the feet of Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and prayed to him most humbly, expressing his sense of profound gratitude and heart-felt thankfulness to him². (174)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 340 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 341 where Janak has paid his obeisance to the assembled sages and seers; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 343 where Janak paid his respects and prayed to sage Vishwamitra.]

भाइन्ह सहित बहोरि बिनय रघुबीरहिं ।
गदगद कंठ नयन जल उर धरि धीरहिं ॥175॥
कृपा सिंधु सुख सिंधु सुजान सिरोमनि ।
तात समय सुधि करबि छोह छाड़ब जनि ॥176॥

bhā'inha sahita bahōri binaya raghubīrahim.
gadagada kaṇṭha nayana jala ura dhari dhīrahim. 175.
kṛpā sindhu sukha sindhu sujāna sirōmani.
tāta samaya sudhi karabi chōha chāṛaba jani. 176.

175-176. After that, he (Janak) prayed to Raghubir (Sri Ram) along with his brothers. His throat was choked with emotions of warm love, affection, delight and exhilaration as well as from the sorrow of separation (from his dearest daughter Sita, his son-in-law Sri Ram, as well as other daughters and their husbands, the other brothers of Sri Ram). Tears welled up and rolled down from his eyes.

Nevertheless, he somehow managed to gather courage and patience in his overwhelmed heart, and said to Lord Ram—'Oh an ocean of grace, mercy and kindness! Oh an ocean of happiness, joy and delight! Oh the most exalted amongst gentlemen who are virtuous, righteous and noble! Oh my dear and beloved son! Remember us from time to time. Never forsake us and your affection and warmth for us.' (175-176)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342.

Lord Ram lovingly reciprocated Janak's emotions. See Chanda no. 22 below.]

जनि छोह छाड़ब बिनय सुनि रघुबीर बहु बिनती करी ।
मिलि भेटि सहित सनेह फिरेउ बिदेह मन धीरज धरी ॥
सो समौ कहत न बनत कछु सब भुवन भरि करुना रहे ।
तब कीन्ह कोसलपति पयान निसान बाजे गहगहे ॥22॥

chanda:

jani chōha chāṛaba binaya suni raghubīra bahu binatī karī.
mili bhēṭi sahita sanēha phirē'u bidēha mana dhīraja dhārī.
sō samau kahata na banata kachu saba bhuvana bhari karunā rahē.
taba kīnha kōsalapati payāna nisāna bājē gahagahē. 22.

Chanda 22. Hearing the earnest prayers of Janak who had said (in verse no. 176 above) ‘do not abandon your warmth and affections for us’, Raghubir (Sri Ram) felt touched, and he reciprocated his father-in-law’s sentiments by also praying to him politely with the same warmth and in the same manner. [That is, Lord Ram assured Janak that he need not worry at all as the relationship that has been established now between the two families is a permanent one. There is no question of him or any other member of his family ever foretting Janak and his affectionate warmth.]¹

Thereafter, Videh² (Janak) met everyone else (for the last time) and bid them all farewell³, and gathering courage and fortitude in his heart, he returned back (to his city)⁴. It is not possible to say anything about those sorrowful moments—the entire world was filled with grief, sorrow, gloom and sadness⁵.

After that, the lord of Kaushal (king Dasrath) cheerfully made his exit from Janakpur and headed for his own capital of Ayodhya to the accompaniment of the beating of drums and playing of trumpets⁶. (Chanda no. 22)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 342.

²King Janak was called Videh which means ‘one without a body’. It means that he was the most renunciate king, deeply steeped in the philosophy of Vedanta which regards the soul as the true self and the body of the individual as a distinct entity which is separate from the soul and is perishable. A renunciate person is one who, inter-alia, does not get involved with the body, its sense organs, their objects of gratification in this illusionary, artificial, delusionary, mundane world, and remains aloof from the deeds done by the body by the virtue of taking birth due to past deeds done by the creature. Such a soul is called enlightened, self-realised, and by extension, one who is not attached to his body and the surrounding world. King Janak was the only king who had the honour of having this title.

But the charm of the Lord was such that even such an enlightened king lost his composure and showed signs of worries, of amusement, of affection and attachments, of sorrows of separation and remorse—in fact, any emotion or sentiment at all.

³Besides Lord Ram, Janak had also met and duly honoured the other three brothers individually. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 342—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 343.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 343.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 334; (c) Doha no. 337; and (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 338.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 344.

Refer also to verse no. 169 of the current book ‘Janki Mangal’.]

पंथ मिले भृगुनाथ हाथ फरसा लिए।
 डाटहिं आँखि देखाइ कोप दारुन किए॥177॥
 राम कीन्ह परितोष रोष रिस परिहरि।
 चले सौँप सारंग सुफल लोचन करि॥178॥

pantha milē bhr̥gunātha hātha pharasā li'ē.
 ḍāṭahim āṁkhi dēkhā'i kōpa dārūna ki'ē. 177.
 rāma kīnha paritōṣa rōṣa risa parihari.
 calē saumpa sārāṅga suphala lōcana kari. 178.

177-178. On the way back to Ayodhya, they met Bhr̥gunath (sage Parashuram) with a battle-axe in his hand. He started scolding and pouring scorn at them with vengeance, seeking retribution for the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow. He glared at them menacingly with angry and wrathful eyes¹. (177)

But Sri Ram satisfied him (i.e. calmed him down with polite words)². The great sage then regretted for his anger and the way he had behaved with Lord Ram³, gave the Lord his own bow (that he had got from Lord Vishnu)⁴, and then seeking forgiveness from the Lord and blessing himself that he was so lucky to have seen the Supreme Being personally at so close quarters⁵, he went peacefully away (to do penances)⁶. (178)

[Note—Sage Parashuram was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. So when he heard the sound of the breaking of the bow and learnt that it was indeed Shiva's bow, he mistook it as someone doing it to insult Shiva. He became exceedingly angry and vehement. At that time Parashuram had not known that Ram was not an ordinary prince or king, but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself in a human form. So he rushed to confront the Lord and seek revenge.

He had not realised that if Shiva had not wanted the bow to break, no power on earth could have done it. Therefore, the very fact that the bow broke so easily in the hands of Lord Ram goes to prove that Shiva had wanted it to be so. Lord Ram is worshipped by Shiva, and the latter constantly repeats the holy name of 'Ram' as the great spiritual Mantra that provides the creature emancipation and salvation. Lord Shiva is known to provide liberation and deliverance to a dying man by uttering this holy name of 'Ram' in the dying man's ears. In fact, Lord Ram too worships Lord Shiva, and this is proved when the Lord had established a Lingam and invoked Shiva's blessings before the commencement of the war at Lanka to free Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana. Both Shiva and Ram have independently declared on different occasions that if someone wishes to please either of them by worship and prayer then he must please the other deity too. In other words, Shiva and Ram are the two faces of the same Supreme Being.

However, when Parashuram rushed and started throwing tantrums in front of Lord Ram, his anger was gradually dissipated like a man beating his head against a mountain. By and by, his anger vanished and he realised the truth of the matter. So the sage asked Lord Ram to forgive him and went to the mountains to do penances to regain his glory that was lost due to his unwarranted showing of anger.

Another important point is this—in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', popularly known as the Ramayana, sage Parashuram arrives at the venue of the marriage ceremony itself, and not while the marriage party was returning back to Ayodhya as is depicted here in Janki Mangal. It ought to be noted that this latter version is endorsed in the Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas too—refer: Baal Kand, Canto no. 7.

In another great version of the story of the Ramayana, the one written by sage Valmiki, this version of Parashuram meeting Lord Ram and his party while they were going back to Ayodhya after marriage is also endorsed in its Baal Kand, Canto nos. 74-76.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 270; (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 271; (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 274; (e) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 275; (f) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 276; (g) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 281.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (b) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 281; (c) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 282; (d) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 285.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book known as 'Dohawali', verse nos. 431-433. A detailed English version of this book has been published by me and available at www.amazon.com in a kindle version, as well as at www.createpace.com in a print version.]

Return of the marriage party to Ayodhya

रघुबर भुज बल देखि उछाह बरातिन्ह ।
मुदित राउ लखि सनमुख बिधि सब भाँतिन्ह ।।179।।
एहि बिधि ब्याहि सकल सुत जग जसु छायउ ।
मग लोगन्हि सुख देत अवधपति आयउ ।।180।।

raghubara bhuja bala dēkhi uchāha barātinha.
mudita rā'u lakhi sanamukha bidhi saba bhām̐tinha. 179.
ēhi bidhi byāhi sakala suta jaga jasu chāya'u.
maga lōganhi sukha dēta avadhapati āya'u. 180.

179-180. Recalling the strength of Lord Ram's arms (by which he broke the mighty bow of Lord Shiva as easily as breaking a twig) and observing the magical effect of his dynamic personality (that humbled even the formidable sage Parashuram whose anger was legendary in as much as it created terror in the heart of those who dared to confront him), both king Dasrath as well as all the members of the marriage party felt extremely happy and exhilarated. The king felt especially happy, honoured and glad when he realised that the Creator had been exceptionally kind towards him (because he was blessed with such a wonderful and powerful son as Lord Sri Ram)¹. (179)

In this manner, having got all his sons married in a glorious way, the king (Dasrath) was able to spread his fame and glory far and wide in all the directions of the world. [All the great kings and princes of the time had assembled at Janakpur to try their hands at lifting and stringing the formidable bow to prove their strength and might, or to

simply witness the event. It was in this gathering that Lord Ram had broken the bow very easily when all of the competitors had failed to as much as move the bow a fraction of an inch. This in itself was no mean achievement, and was enough to establish the fame and glory of Ram throughout the world. It is natural that any father would feel extremely proud and honoured if his son achieves such a great feat, and so was the case with Dasrath.]

Delighting the residents who lived along the way and spreading joy all around, the king finally returned back to his capital at Ayodhya². (180)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 291—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294.

It must be noted, however, that in the book 'Ram Charit Manas' this happiness of Dasrath and others in the royal assembly relates to the time when the messenger of king Janak described the bow-breaking ceremony in the court of king Dasrath where he had gone to invite the latter to come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony of Sri Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 343 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

Celebrations in Ayodhya

होहिं सुमंगल सगुन सुमन सुर बरषहिं ।
नगर कोलाहल भयउ नारि नर हरषहिं ॥181॥
घाट बाट पुर द्वार बजार बनावहिं ।
बीथीं सींचि सुगंध सुमंगल गावहिं ॥182॥

hōhīm sumaṅgala saguna sumana sura baraṣahīm.
nagara kōlāhala bhaya'u nāri nara haraṣahīm. 181.
ghāṭa bāṭa pura dvāra bajāra banāvahīm.
bīthīm sīñci sugandha sumaṅgala gāvahīm. 182.

181-182. When the marriage party arrived at Ayodhya, numerous auspicious signs and favourable omens started occurring. The Gods are showered flowers from the sky. The city erupted in a mood of exhilaration and joyous tumult. All the men and women folk of the city were ecstatic with joy and became very excited. (181)

The citizens enthusiastically decorated the various Ghats (banks of river Saryu), the roads and avenues, the buildings and palaces, the marketplaces and each individual house of the city. All the avenues, streets, lanes and by-lanes were washed with scented water. They sang auspicious and felicitous songs in merriment to celebrate the arrival of the marriage party with the newly wed princes. (182)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 347—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 348; (c) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 349; (d) Doha no. 353; (e) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 355.

Refer also verse no. 183-184 and Chanda no. 23 of this book 'Janki Mangal' below.]

चौकैं पूरैं चारु कलस ध्वज साजहिं ।

बिबिधि प्रकार गहागह बाजन बाजहिं ।।183 ।।
 बंदनवार बितान पताका घर घर ।
 रोपे सफल सपल्लव मंगल तरुबर ।।184 ।।

caiṅkaiṁ pūraiṁ cāru kalasa dhvaja sājahim.
 bibidhi prakāra gahāgaha bājana bājahim. 183.
 bandanavāra bitāna patākā ghara ghara.
 rōpē saphala sapallava maṅgala tarubara. 184.

183-184. The denizens of the city made lovely geometrical patterns, such as elegant squares and circles, on the ground, and adorned them with ceremonial pitchers and decorative flags. Many kinds of musical instruments were cheerfully played with gusto and great enthusiasm, and their sound reverberated in the city in all directions. (183)

In every household, festoons, buntings, flags, canopies and awnings were put up, and countless decorative trees, complete with fruits and green leaves, were planted everywhere in the city. (184)

[Note—See forgoing verse nos. 181-182 along with the accompanying note.]

मंगल बिटप मंजुल बिपुल दधि दूब अच्छत रोचना ।
 भरि थार आरति सजहिं सब सारंग सावक लोचना ।।
 मन मुदित कौसल्या सुमित्रा सकल भूपति—भामिनी ।
 सजि साजु परिछन चलीं रामहि मत्त कुंजर गामिनी ।।23 ।।

chanda:

maṅgala biṭapa maṅjula bipula dadhi dūba acchata rōcanā.
 bhari thāra ārati sajahim saba sāraṅga sāvaka lōcanā.
 mana mudita kausalyā sumitrā sakala bhūpati-bhāminī.
 saji sāju parichana calim rāmahi matta kuṅjara gāminī. 23.

Chanda 23. Many types of beautiful and auspicious trees were planted everywhere in the decorated city.

Women folk, with beautiful eyes resembling those of a fawn, gathered together cheerfully and arranged the different paraphernalia—such as curd, grass, rice-grains and sandalwood etc. arranged on a platter—that are necessary for performing the Arti of the newly-wed princes and their brides.

Kaushalya (the chief queen and mother of Lord Ram), Sumitra (the second queen and mother of Laxman) and other queens were very delighted and jubilant in their hearts. They assembled all the items necessary for the ceremonial welcome to be extended to the newly-wed couples as well as the accompanying marriage party. With this in hand, all of them went out of the palace with a graceful and dignified gait resembling that of a proud and elegant elephant (i.e. they walked majestically with elegance and dignity befitting great queens) to receive and welcome Lord Sri Ram and the marriage party. (Chanda no. 23)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

बधुन सहित सुत चारिउ मातु निहारहिं ।
 बारहिं बार आरती मुदित उतारहिं ॥185॥
 करहिं निछावरि छिनु छिनु मंगल मुद भरीं ।
 दूलह दुलहिनिन्ह देखि प्रेम पयनिधि परीं ॥186॥

badhuna sahita suta cāri'u mātu nihārahim.
 bārahim bāra āratī mudita utārahim. 185.
 karahim nichāvāri chinu chinu maṅgala muda bharīm.
 dūlahā dulaheininha dēkhi prēma payanidhi parīm. 186.

185-186. The mothers intently watch, with great love and warmth overwhelming their hearts, the four sons along with their brides. They become exceedingly cheerful while performing the welcoming Arti. [The 'Arti' is a ritual whereby lighted oil lamps, along with other small things such as rice-grains, kush grass, flowers and curd etc., arranged on a platter are waved in a clockwise movement in the front of the guest as a token of respect and welcome.] (185)

They became overwhelmed with the warmth of joy and happiness, and made offering and sacrifices every other moment. They appeared to have immersed themselves in an ocean of happiness and joy when they saw the brides and the grooms. (186)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 348—to Doha no. 350.]

देत पावड़े अरघ चलीं लै सादर ।
 उमगि चलेउ आनंद भुवन भुइँ बादर ॥187॥
 नारि उहारु उघारि दुलहिनिन्ह देखहिं ।
 नैन लाहु लहि जनम सफल करि लेखहिं ॥188॥

dēta pāvaṛē aragha calīm lai sādara.
 umagi calē'u ānanda bhuvana bhu'im' bādara. 187.
 nāri uhāru ughāri dulaheininha dēkhahim.
 naina lāhu lahi janama saphala kari lēkhahim. 188.

187-188. The mothers spread out the ceremonial welcoming carpets and offered libations to the grooms and their brides as they escorted the couples respectfully towards the palace¹. At that time, huge symbolic waves of joy and happiness, exhilaration and ecstasy, warmth and emotions surged and heaved in all the directions of the world, covering the earth as well as the sky². [In other words, there was great rejoicing and joyousness everywhere, in the city as well as other places.] (187)

The women folk lift the veil over the faces of the brides and glance at their beautiful faces. This thrills them no end, and they feel lucky that they have been amply rewarded for having eyes, and that their having taken birth as human beings has been fruitful, worthwhile and rewarding.³ [When the ladies saw the faces of the four brides, they were overjoyed, and thanked their good luck that they could see such beautiful faces

in their lives. They thanked the Creator for giving them a human body with two eyes that could see such a magnificent sight, for if they had been born as some other creature they would have missed this wonderful opportunity.] (188)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 348; (b) Doha no. 349.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 349; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 355.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 325; (b) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 348; (c) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 349; (d) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 350.]

भवन आनि सनमानि सकल मंगल किए ।
बसन कनक मनि धेनु दान बिप्रन्ह दिए ॥189॥
जाचक कीन्ह निहाल असीसहिं जहँ तहँ ।
पूजे देव पितर सब राम उदय कहँ ॥190॥

bhavana āni sanamāni sakala maṅgala ki'ē.
basana kanaka mani dhēnu dāna bipranha di'ē. 189.
jācaka kīnha nihāla asīsaḥiṁ jaham̐ taham̐.
pūjē dēva pitara saba rāma udaya kaham̐. 190.

189-190. They (the brides and the grooms) were respectfully brought to the royal palace and all auspicious rituals were done¹. Liberal donations in the form of gifts of gold, gems, cows and garments were given to Brahmins². (189)

Alm-seekers and beggars were satisfied with alms and liberal charity. They gave their blessings to the newly-wed couples and the royal family³. Gods and spirits of dead ancestors were worshipped for the welfare, fame and prosperity of Lord Sri Ram⁴. (190)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 349—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 350.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 352.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 351 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 351.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 351.]

नेगचार करि दीनह सबहि पहिरावनि ।
समधी सकल सुआसिनि गुरतिय पावनि ॥191॥
जोरी चारि निहारि असीसत निकसहिं ।
मनहुँ कुमुद बिधु—उदय मुदित मन बिकसहिं ॥192॥

nēgacāra kari dīnaha sabahi pahirāvani.
samadhī sakala su'āsini guratiya pāvani. 191.
jōrī cāri nihāri asīsata nikasaḥiṁ.
manahum̐ kumuda bidhu-udaya mudita mana bikasaḥiṁ. 192.

191-192. They (the queens) did all the traditional rituals according to established procedures and traditions¹. Then they gave magnificent robes and wearing apparels to all—their relatives, kith and kin, all the ladies of the city including the elderly women, as well as to the Guru's wife. (191)

All of them profusely blessed the four couples and came out of the palace². They were as jubilant and cheerful in their hearts as water lilies are at the sight of the rising moon. (192)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 350 Kha; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 352.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 351—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 353; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha 360.]

बिकसहिं कुमुद जिमि देखि बिधु भइ अवध सुख सोभामई ।
एहि जुगुति राम बिबाह गावहिं सकल कबि कीरति नई ॥
उपबीत ब्याह उछाह जे सिय राम मंगल गावहीं ।
तुलसी सकल कल्यान ते नर नारि अनुदिन पावहीं ॥24॥

chanda:

bikasahim kumuda jimi dēkhi bidhu bha'i avadha sukha sōbhāmaī.
ēhi juguti rāma bibāha gāvahim sakala kabi kīrati naī.
upabīta byāha uchāha jē siya rāma maṅgala gāvahim.
tulasī sakala kalyāna tē nara nāri anudina pāvahim. 24.

Chanda 24. All the women folk are exhilarant, happy and ecstatic with joy just like the water lilly is when it sees the moon in the night. [The water lilly opens its buds and petals as soon as the moon rises, indicating in a symbolic way that this flower is happy at the sight of the moon. Likewise, when the ladies of the royal household as well as the general women folk of the city of Ayodhya see the newly-wed couples they cheer up and become very happy.]

At that time, Ayodhya was full of magnificence, glamour, elegance, happiness and joy that overflowed all over it. In this way, great poets and expert bards do their best at singing the wonderful and glories events associated with the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.

Tulsidas says that those people who sing these auspicious verses related to the divine marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, verses that provide all round welfare, joy, cheer and happiness to all living beings, would invariably be blessed with good fortunes, well-being, happiness and auspiciousness in all the spheres of their daily life. (Chanda no. 24)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 361 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4.]

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PART—2/Section-2

Goswami Tulsidas'

“RAM LALA NAHACHU”

तुलसीकृत— राम लला नहछू

Tulasīdās-kr̥ta: Rāmalalā Nahachū

श्री सतगुरु सिय—पीय चरन चित लावउँ ।

भरत लखन रिपुदवन पवनसुत ध्यावउँ ॥

श्रीतुलसी पद कमल सप्रेम मनावउँ ।

रामलला नहछू जेहि तिलक बनावउँ ॥

Invocation

śrī satagurū siya-pīya carana cita lāva'um̐. bharata lakhana ripudavana
pavanasuta dhyāva'um̐..

śrītulasī pada kamala saprēma manāva'um̐. rāmalalā nahachū jēhi tilaka
banāva'um̐..

I hereby invoke and remember the holy feet of the righteous Guru (moral preceptor) as well as of the dear husband of Sita (i.e. of Lord Ram).

I meditate upon Bharat, Laxman, Shatrughan (known as 'Ripudavan') and Hanuman (known as 'Pavan-sut' as he is the son of the Wind God).

Tulsidas says that I invoke the blessings of the holy feet of all of them as I am about to start writing the verses of 'Ram Lala Nahachu'.

[Note—It is a tradition amongst all poets and bards of India to begin any text with first paying their obeisance to the deity they worship as well as their Guru, their teacher. In the case of Goswami Tulsidas, the deity is Lord Ram. Since the Guru occupies a position senior to the deity, Tulsidas has first paid his obeisance to the Guru and then to Lord Ram. Again, since this book is dedicated to 'Ram as a groom who was the beloved of Sita', Tulsidas uses the phrase 'Siya-Piya' meaning the beloved one of Sita.

He then goes on to pay his respects to all the other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, and then to Hanuman as the latter is deemed to be the most enlightened amongst the Lord's devotees and also the one who is dearest to the Lord.]

Rāmalalā Nahachū—The Text

आदि सारदा गनपति गौरि मनाइय हो ।
 रामलला कर नहछू गाइ सुनाइय हो ॥
 जेहि गाये सिधि होय परमनिधि पाइय हो ।
 कोटि जनम कर पातक दूरि सो जाइय हो ॥१॥

ādi sārādā ganapati gauri manā'iya hō. rāmalalā kara nahachū gā'i sunā'iya hō..

jēhi gāyēm sidhi hōya paramanidhi pā'iya hō. kōṭi janama kara pātaka dūri sō
 jā'iya hō..1..

In the beginning, I (Tulsidas) pray to Sarda (“sārādā”; goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech and knowledge), Lord Ganesh (“ganapati”; the son of Shiva and the god who is worshipped at the beginning of any endeavour to invoke his blessings for its successful completion), and Gauri (goddess Parvati, the Mother Goddess and the divine consort of Lord Shiva as well as the mother of Ganesh).

Having invoked their blessings and grace, I shall now sing the auspicious song known as ‘Nahachu’ that pertains to the marriage ceremony of my beloved Lord, Sri Ram. [The word used here is ‘Ram-Lala’ meaning ‘dear Ram’. The word ‘Lala’ is used affectionately for a son or a young boy by his elders. Since the occasion when this particular song is sung is prior to Lord Ram’s marriage, it is apt to address him as a ‘dear boy’. ‘Lala’ is an affectionate term, and it is liberally used for the groom who is dear to all those attending his marriage.]

By singing this song, one attains all types of Siddhis (successes and achievements in life), and at the same time the singer obtains supreme spiritual asset in the form of bliss, peace and happiness (‘Param Nidhi’).

Another great benefit of this singing is that the accumulated sins of countless previous births are dissipated and neutralized, and the person finds eternal emancipation and salvation for himself. (1)

[Note—Goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh are always worshipped at the beginning of any effort so that it is successfully completed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, the very first two lines at the beginning that reiterates this

view. Here also Tulsidas says that he is about to start narration of the divine story of Lord Ram in Chandas (verses) and is requesting ‘Vaani-Vinaayko’, i.e. the patron deity of speech, goddess Saraswati, and Lord Vinayak, Ganesh, to bless him.

Parvati is also a giver of auspiciousness and good luck, and by serving or worshipping her nothing remains inaccessible or unfulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 67.

During the ritual of the ‘Nahachu’, the nails and hairs of Lord Ram were cut and trimmed. After this ceremony, the groom takes a bath to clean himself, and then he wears new clean clothes. This has a great symbolic meaning—that is, when a person remembers Lord Ram and sings the divine verses dedicated to the Lord, all his sins and their negative effects on his spiritual well-being are trimmed and cut-off. His earlier unclean self is washed of all the dirt and filth that had been sticking onto him over so many births in the past as well as during the time that has passed in the current life also. His inner self that was feeling restless and tormented by so many problems of mundane life that it had to face daily, now begins to find peace and happiness when the person starts singing the divine story of Lord Ram or even some incident related to the Lord’s life, such as this ceremony of ‘Nahachu’.

Indeed, just like the physical cleaning of the groom before his marriage and his living a new life with his beloved wife, these verses help the devotee to clean himself of all worldly impurities and prepare to lead a new life in the company of his beloved Lord, Sri Ram.]

कोटिन्ह बाजन बाजहिं दषरथ के गृह हो ।

देवलोक सब देखहिं आनंद अति हिय हो ॥

नगर सोहावन लागत बरनि ज जातै हो ।

कौसल्या के हरष न हृदय समातै हो ॥2॥

kōṭinha bājana bājahim daṣaratha kē gr̥ha hō. dēvalōka saba dēkhahim ānam̐da
ati hiya hō..

nagara sōhāvana lāgata barani ja jātai hō. kausalyā kē haraṣa na hr̥daya samātai
hō..2..

At the time of Lord Ram’s ‘Nahachu’ ceremony, countless musical instruments were being played in front of the doorway of king Dasrath, his father, to celebrate the occasion.

The Gods watched the celebrations from the heaven, and they were very thrilled and happy.

The city¹ looked so fabulous that it is not possible to describe it.

Happiness and joy are so intense and huge that the heart of Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram) seems unable to accommodate them. [That is, she is overwhelmed with these emotions; she is feeling ecstatic and excited.] (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram is at present at Janakpur where he had gone with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow ceremony. When his father, king Dasrath, was invited by king Janak, the father of Sita, to come over to Janakpur with the marriage party and formalize the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the guests were lodged at a special place earmarked for them. It was a large area on the outskirts of the city, a sort of mini-city where all arrangements were made for their comfortable stay. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 307.

It was treated as the ‘groom’s city’ for all practical purposes. Hence, this ‘Nahachu’ ceremony was done here. So it is natural that the musical instruments were played on that occasion in this ‘city’.

Musical instruments were routinely played to mark important occasions during the marriage of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(1) Doha no. 324 as well as Chanda stanza no. 1, line no. 2 that precedes it when the marriage rituals were being performed; (2) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343 when the marriage party started from Janakpur for Ayodhya; and (3) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344 when the party arrived at Ayodhya.]

आले हि बाँस के माँड़व मनिगन पूरन हो ।

मोतिन्ह झालर लागि चहूँ दिसि झूलन हो ॥

गंगाजल कर कलस तौ तुरित मँगाइय हो ।

जुवतिन्ह मंगल गाइ राम अन्हवाइय हो ॥३॥

ālē hi bāmśa kē māmṛava manigana pūrana hō. mōtinha jhālara lāgi cahūṁ diṣi jhūlana hō..

gaṅgājala kara kalasa tau turita mamṅā'iya hō. juvatinha maṅgala gā'i rāma anhavā'iya hō..3..

A platform made from green bamboo was erected. It was with priceless gems and precious stones. Festoons and hangings strung with pearls were hung on all its sides.

A pitcher full of the sacred water of river Ganges was brought, and the ladies of the household made Lord Ram take a bath with it as they sung melodious auspicious songs. (3)

गजमुक्ता हीरामनि चौक पुराइय हो ।
देइ सुअरघ रामकहँ लेइ बैठाइय हो ॥

कनक खंभ चहुँ ओर मध्य सिंहासन हो ।
मानिक दीप बराय बैठि तेहि आसन हो ॥४॥

gajamuktā hīrāmani cauka purā'iya hō. dē'i su'aragha rāmakaham' lē'i baiṭhā'iya hō..

kanaka khambha cahum' ōra madhya simhāsana hō. mānika dīpa barāya baiṭhi tēhi āsana hō..4..

Ceremonial geometrical patterns in the form of squares and circles were made on the ground (with white wheat flour, yellow turmeric powder, saffron and red oxide). These were embellished with 'Gajmuktas' ("gajamuktā"; which is sap effusing from the head of elephants when they are in heat; it solidifies and forms 'pearl-like' rounded globules), 'Hiraas' ("hīrā"; diamonds) and 'Manis' ("manī"; other precious stones and gems).

Consecrated water was poured slowly from a spouted pot in front of Lord Ram as he was escorted to this decorated pavilion and made to sit there on the designated seat. [This is known as 'Aragha'. The honoured guest is escorted to the seat while a thin stream of water is poured in his front from some pot as he walks slowly forward.]

The pavilion has golden pillars on all its corners. In its center is a magnificent throne. Lord Ram sat on that throne and lit an oil lamp made from ruby. (4)

[Note—The tradition of making geometrical patterns of various shapes and sizes on the ground during religious ceremonies and festivals is common in India. There are umpteen numbers of instances in Ram Charit Manas where such squares and circles are made. In common parlance they are known as 'Chowk'—meaning a square. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 288—the occasion is the preparation of the venue of the marriage at Janakpur; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 8—the occasion is Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, preparing to celebrate the news that said that king Dasrath proposed to anoint Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya; and again (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 9—the occasion here is the preparation being made in Ayodhya to welcome the Lord upon his return from the 14-year forest exile and the conquest of Lanka.]

बनि—बनि आवति नारि जानि गृह मायन हो ।
बिहँसत आव लोहारिनि हाथ बरायन हो ॥

अहिरिनि हाथ दहेंड़ि सगुन लेइ आवइ हो ।

उनरत जो वनु देखिं नृपति मन भावइ हो ।।5।।

bani-bani āvati nāri jāni gr̥ha māyana hō. bihamśata āva lōhārini hātha barāyana hō..

ahirini hātha dahēṇḍi saguna lē'i āva'i hō. unarata jō vanu dēkhiṁ nr̥pati mana bhāva'i hō..5..

When the ladies learnt that the auspicious time for the 'Maayan' ritual has arrived, they decorated themselves in all finery and arrived at the venue. ['Maayan' is a rite when the groom is made to pay his obeisance to the patron goddesses of the family, as well as to the spirit of dead ancestors known as Pitras. It is done to seek their blessings.]

Female members of the iron-smiths' families came cheerfully, laughing and rejoicing, with iron bracelets known as 'Baraayan' in hand. [This iron bracelet is to be worn by the groom, and he rewards these ladies with gifts. The iron ring is used instead of gem-studded bracelet because it is believed that iron helps to ward off evil spirits and afford protection to the groom from bad effects of black magic. The female iron-smith was very happy because she expected rich gifts from the groom, Lord Ram, and his parents, king Dasrath and mother Kaushalya.]

Then came the milkmaid with a clay pitcher full of curd in her hands. [This is also regarded as a good omen.] She was young and pretty, and her charming image even enchanted the king. (5)

रूप सलोनि तँबोलिनि बीरा हाथेहि हो ।
जाकी ओर बिलोकहि मन तेहि साथे हि हो ।।

दरजिनि गोरेगात लिहे कर जोरा हो ।
केसरि परम लगाइ सुगंधन बोरा हो ।।6।।

rūpa salōni tam̐bolini bīrā hāthēhi hō. jākī ōra bilōkahi mana tēhi sāthē hi hō..

darajini gōrēgāta lihē kara jōrā hō. kēsari parama lagā'i sugandhana bōrā hō..6..

The next to come was the pretty female betel-leaf seller. She had a lovely pair of betel leaves finely folded in her palms. She was so pretty that all eyes turned towards her, and whomsoever she glanced felt lucky and found that his or her mind was riveted to her. [The beautiful betel seller enchanted everyone present there by her beauty and glamour.]

After her was the turn of the female tailor who was of a fair complexion. She arrived with a wonderful set of garments that were to be worn by the groom in her fair-complexioned hands. It consisted of a long shirt (known as a 'Kurta'), a length of cloth that is wrapped around the lower part of the body (known as the 'Dhoti'), and a turban (known as 'Paag').

These garments were coloured in saffron and dipped in perfumes. (6)

मोचिनि बदन—सकोचिनि हीरा माँगन हो ।

पनहि लिहे कर सोभित सुन्दर आँगन हो ॥

बतिया कै सुधरि मलिनिया सुंदरि गावतहि हो ।

कनक रतन मनि मौर लिहे मुसुकातहि हो ॥७॥

mōcini badana-sakōcini hīrā māmṅana hō. panahi lihē kara sōbhita sundara
āmṅana hō..

batiyā kai sudhari maliniyā sundari gāvatahi hō. kanaka ratana mani maura lihē
musukātahi hō..7..

The wife of the shoemaker (the cobbler's wife) arrived with her contribution (gift). She was hesitant to go near the groom and so stood shyly in the forecourt of the venue. She had a diamond-studded hair-pin on her forehead and carried a beautiful pair of shoes for the groom (Lord Ram) in her hands. [She was hesitant to enter the pavilion because being a cobbler's wife she felt uneasy when she saw the high and the mighty on the dais. She could not gather enough self-confidence to go right up to the place where the groom, Sri Ram, was seated. So she sheepishly stood outside.]

Meanwhile, the gardener's beautiful wife, who is very clever at talking, also arrived and stood with a broad smile on her face. She had brought with her a fabulous tiara made of gold that was studded with priceless gems and precious stones. [This ornament is worn on the groom's turban.] (7)

[Note—The cobbler's wife is standing quietly in a sheepish manner, while the gardener's wife is chirpy, talking away merrily with all those who stood with her.]

कटि कै झीनि बरिनियाँ छाता पानिहि हो ।

चंद्रबदनि मृगलोचनि सब रसखानिहि हो ॥

नैन बिसाल नउनियाँ भौं चमकावइ हो ।

देइ गारी रनिवासहि प्रमुदित गावइ हो ॥८॥

kaṭi kai jhīni bariniyām' chātā pānihi hō. candrabadani mrgalōcani saba
rasakhānihi hō..

naina bisāla na'uniyām' bhaum camakāva'i hō. dē'i gārī ranivāsahi pramudita
gāva'i hō..8..

The next to turn up was the washer-man's wife. She had a slim waist and stood with an umbrella in hand. Her face was beautiful like a full moon, and her eyes were equally like a female deer. She was so attractive that it appeared that she was a treasury of the virtue of charm.

The barber's wife was also there. She had large eyes, and her eyebrows were flickering and twirling mischievously as she merrily sang songs with taunting lyrics targeted at the queens of the royal household. [On such happy occasions as a marriage in the family, it is a practice of singing some teasing songs. No one feels offended by them; rather the people enjoy these songs as they make them laugh and help to make the atmosphere jovial and entertaining. This is the reason why this lady's eyebrows and eyes are moving in a mischievous manner. She is deriving immense pleasure by making lewd remarks which is unthinkable under normal circumstances. She seems to thoroughly enjoying herself.] (8)

कौसल्या की जेठि दीन्ह अनुसासन हो ।

‘नहछू जाइ करावहु बैठि सिंहासन हो ।।’

गोद लिहे कौसल्या बैठि रामहि वर हो ।

सोभित दूलह राम सीस पर आँचर हो ।।9।।

kausilyā kī jēṭhi dīnha anusāsana hō. 'nahachū jā'i karāvahu baiṭhi simhāsana
hō..'

gōda lihē kausilyā baiṭhi rāmahi vara hō. sōbhita dūlaha rāma sīsa para āṁcara
hō..9..

The elders in the family (such as the wife of the clan's Guru, sage Vashistha) requested asked Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram)—‘Go to the throne (the decorated seat where Lord Ram was seated in center of the pavilion) and perform the ‘Nahachu’ ceremony.’¹

So, Kaushalya sat on the throne with Lord Ram on her laps*. She had covered his head with her 'Anchal', i.e. with the end of her long and seamless wearing apparel known as a Sari that is worn by ladies by wrapping it around their bodies.

This sight made Lord Ram look very cute and lovely. (9)

[Note—The 'Nahachu' ceremony involves the cutting of the hairs on the head, the shaving of the beard, and the trimming of the nails on the hand and the feet of the groom. *The mother makes the son sit on her laps, and the barber's wife performs this ritual. So Lord Ram's mother, Kaushalya, made him sit on her laps while the barber's wife trimmed his hairs and nails.]

नाउनि अति गुन खानि तौ बेगि बोलाई हो ।

करि सिंगार अति लोन तौ बिहँसति आई हो ॥

कनक चुनिन सों लसित नहरनी लिये कर हो ।

आनँद हिय न समाइ देखि रामहि वर हो ॥10॥

nā'uni ati guna khāni tau bēgi bōlā'ī hō. kari siṅgāra ati lōna tau bihamṣati ā'ī hō..

kanaka cunina sōm lasita naharanī liyē kara hō. ānamḍa hiya na samā'i dēkhi rāmahi vara hō..10..

The barber's skilled wife was immediately summoned to perform the ritual (of Nahachu). She came there, fully decorated and smiling cheerfully.

She held a small scissor and a nail-cutter made of gold and studded with precious stones. Happiness and joy seemed to overflow from her heart as she watched Lord Ram as a groom from such close quarters. (10)

[Note—This is the reason why the barber's wife appeared to be very happy as she moved her eyes and eyebrows mischievously as described in verse no. 8 above. She was feeling proud and privileged that today she is going to acquire a special status as being the only woman from amongst all those who were standing in a queue who will be called to perform an essential ceremony associated with Lord Ram's marriage, the ceremony of the 'Nahachu'. By doing this she will get a rare opportunity to touch the holy feet of Lord Ram, the feet that has such great mystical powers that they provided liberation and deliverance to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who had been converted into a stone by a curse. When the Lord touched this stone, Ahilya was freed from the curse and went back to her husband, sage Gautam. So it is natural that the barber's wife should feel highly excited and lucky—making her twirl her eyes and eyebrows.

This incident of liberation of Ahilya is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and the whole of the Chanda that follows them.]

काने कनक तरीवन, बेसरि सोहइ हो ।

गजमुकुता कर हार कंठमनि मोहइ हो ॥

कर कँकन, कटि किंकिनि, नूपुर बाजइ हों ।

रानी कै दीन्हीं सारी तौ अधिक बिराजइ हों ॥11॥

kānē kanaka tarivana, bēsari sōha'i hō. gajamukutā kara hāra kaṇṭhamani mōha'i hō..

kara kaṁkana, kaṭi kiṁkini, nūpura bāja'i hōm. rānī kai dīnhīm sārī tau adhika birāja'i hōm..11..

[This verse describes the ornaments that the barber's wife wore on that occasion.]

She was wearing a beautiful ear-ring made of gold that was moulded to look like a golden flower. Her nose was adorned by a nose-ring. A long necklace made of 'Gajamukta' (the pearl-like solidified sap effusing from the forehead of elephants when they are in heat; regarded as a rare piece of jewelry) dangled over her chest, and a similar smaller necklace adorned her neck. This sight enchanted the mind of viewers.

She was adorned by bangles on her wrists and arm-bands on her biceps. The waist-band around her slim waist and the anklets worn on her feet chimed sweetly.

The Sari (the long seamless cloth wrapped around the body by Indian ladies) that she wore for the occasion was gifted to her by Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram), and she looked wonderful in it. [Kaushalya had got a special Sari made for this occasion, and it was richly embroidered with golden and silver threads. So, when the barber's wife came adorned with this Sari and other specially crafted ornaments, she indeed looked fabulous.] (11)

काहे राम जिउ साँवर, लछिमन गोर हो ।

की दहुँ रानि कौसिलहि परिगा भोर हो ॥

राम अहहिँ दसरथ कइ लछिमन आनक हों ।

भरत सत्रुहन भाइ तौ श्रीरघुनाथ क हो ॥12॥

kāhē rāma ji'u sāmvara, lachimana gōra hō. kī dahum' rāni kausilahi parigā bhōra

hō..

rāma ahahim̐ dasaratha ka'i lachimana ānaka hōm̐. bharata satruhana bhā'i tau
śrīraghunātha ka hō..12..

[It must be noted while reading this verse that on such occasions as a marriage in the family, the lady singers are invited to sing songs with many teasing lyrics that may seem apparently vulgar, but are sung not with any malefic intentions against anybody but just as a medium of making the atmosphere light by cracking jokes to make people laugh and smile in mirth. No one takes them seriously, and everyone enjoys them. If they are not sung due to some reason, the attending guests feel that they are missing an opportunity to laugh and poke fun at each other. So these songs have become sort of mandatory during marriage celebrations.]

The ladies (barber's wife and all other women who had assembled at the venue as listed earlier in verse nos. 5-8) sang songs, the lyrics of which meant briefly as follows— 'Why is Ram of a dark complexion, whereas Laxman is of a fair complexion (like his parent, mother Sumitra)? It appears that Kaushalya is confused or is being misled. [The implication is obvious. Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, was of a fair complexion, so this line of the song meant that Ram's mother was someone else. It was intended to tease Kaushalya as well as king Dasrath. But, as has been said in the introductory note of this verse, such lyrics were part of the fun, and never meant to insult or abuse or cast doubts about anyone's integrity at all.]

[When the singer uttered these words, Laxman seemed to get angry, so she immediately changed track and struck back at him with these taunting remarks—] Let me correct myself. Lord Ram is indeed the son of Dasrath (because the king is of a dark complexion), but it seems that Laxman is not so (because he is of a fair complexion and therefore does not resemble his father, Dasrath, like his elder brother Ram, who does). [Normally, the sons of a father inherit his characteristics. For instance, if the father has a dark complexion his children will also have a darkish complexion, but definitely not white or fair. So this singer now targets Laxman as he was of a fair complexion unlike his father, king Dasrath, and his brother, Lord Ram, both of whom were of a dark complexion.]

[Lord Ram's other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, kept quiet. So the singer excused them from any embarrassment when she sang—] It is definite that Bharat and Shatrughan are the brothers of Raghunath, Lord Ram.'

[The singer taunted Laxman but left the other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan alone. This is because Laxman showed annoyance at her first remark against Lord Ram, forgetting that this was not intended to insult the Lord but was part of age-old tradition. The singer knew that she would not be punished by shooting back at Laxman by another scathing remark. Since Bharat and Shatrughan maintained their calm, she excused them. No one minded this aside, and it was taken in the right spirit of rejoicing that corresponded with the occasion.] (12)

आजु अवधपुर आनंद नहछू राम क हो ।

चलहु नयन भरि देखिय सोभाधाम क हो ॥

अति बड़भाग नउनियाँ छुए नख हाथ सों हो ।

नैनन्ह करत गुमान तौ श्रीरघुनाथ सों हो ॥13॥

āju avadhapura ānam̐da nahachū rāma ka hō. calahu nayana bhari dēkhiya
sōbhādhāma ka hō..

ati barābhāga na'uniyām̐ chu'ē nakha hātha sōm̐ hō. nainanha karata gumāna
tau śrīraghunātha sōm̐ hō..13..

There was a talk amongst the subjects of the kingdom of Ayodhya that today was the 'Nahachu' ceremony of Lord Ram, and so all must go and watch the magnificent sight of the image of Lord Ram undergoing this ritual till their eyes were full of it.

Meanwhile, the barber's wife, who was exceedingly lucky at having got an opportunity of holding Lord Ram's feet, touched the Lord's toe nails with her hands as her eyes glowed with pride and happiness. [She was ecstatic for two reasons. One was that she will now get gifts as per her demands, and second was that she was so lucky that she could hold the holy feet of the Lord which very few people can ever hope to access and touch. See verse no. 14 below which explains why this lady was so lucky and happy.] (13)

जो पग नाउनि धोवइ राम धोवावइ हो ।

सो पगधूरि सिद्ध—मुनि दरस न पावइ हो ॥

अतिसय पुहुप क माल राम—उर सोहइ हो ।

तिरछी चितवनि आनंदमनि मुख जोहइ हो ॥14॥

jō paga nā'uni dhōva'i rāma dhōvāva'im̐ hō. sō pagadhūri sid'dha-muni darasa na
pāva'im̐ hō..

atisaya puhupa ka māla rāma-ura sōha'i hō. tirachī citavani ānam̐damani mukha
jōha'i hō..14..

The holy feet of Lord Ram that the barber's wife washed, and which the Lord willingly allowed her to wash, are so divine and holy that even great Siddhas (mystics) and Munis

(hermits, sages and seers) long to have a divine vision of the dust of the same feet but cannot do so, or find it very difficult even after making great efforts. [This is the reason why the barber's wife is feeling proud and happy. Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being in a human form. It is not easy to attain the Lord's holy feet unless the seeker had done great sacrifices and prepare himself by doing penances and observing austerity. The same feet were willingly offered by the Lord for the purpose of cutting the toe-nails during the Nahachu ritual to this ordinary barber's wife. Naturally therefore she was ecstatic and happy beyond measure.]

The garland of flowers on the chest of Lord Ram looks very magnificent and adorable.

The mesmerized barber's wife gazed at the Lord's beautiful face and his enchanting image that gives immense happiness to the beholder as she held his feet in her hand (and forgot about the task at hand). (14)

नख काटत मुसुकाहिं बरनि नहिं जातहि हो ।
पदुमराग—मनि मानहु कोमल गातहि हो ॥

जावक रचति अँगुरिअन्ह मृदुल सुठारी हो ।
प्रभु कर चरन प्रछलि तौ अति सुकुमारी हो ॥15॥

nakha kātata musukāhiṁ barani nahīṁ jātahi hō. padumarāga-mani mānahu
kōmala gātahi hō..

jāvaka racati aṁguri'anha mṛdula suṭhārī hō. prabhu kara carana prachali tau ati
sukumārī hō..15..

Lord Ram smiled as his nails were being trimmed. It is not possible to describe the stunning beauty of that image of the Lord. The nails had been polished red, so they looked as if red ruby have been embedded and arranged in a neat row in some soft velvet cloth. [Here, the soft skin of Lord Ram's feet is compared to the velvet, and the red-coloured nails to the ruby. It is a practice in India that the palms, fingers and nails of the hands, as well as the lower part of the legs from the ankle downwards to the toe nails of both the groom and the bride are coloured in red by applying a thick paste of 'Mehandi' (which is a paste made from the leaves of the myrtle plant).]

After manicuring the nails and washing the feet of Lord Ram, the barber's wife carefully began to make delicate designs on the soft but well-formed toes of the Lord by using a special paint known as 'Mahaavar', also known as 'Aaltaa'. [Mahaavar is a red paint prepared from lac and applied on the skin of the hand and the feet during auspicious occasions, such as marriage. The 'lac' is a resinous substance secreted as a protective covering by the lac insect, and it is used to make varnish, shellac and nail polish etc.] (15)

भइ निवछावरि बहु बिधि जो जस लायक हो ।

तुलसिदास बलि जाउँ देखि रघुनायक हो ॥

राजन दीन्हे हाथी, रानिन्ह हार हो ।

भरि गे रतन पदारथ सूप हजार हो ॥16॥

bha'i nivachāvari bahu bidhi jō jasa lāyaka hō. tulasidāsa bali jā'um' dēkhi
raghunāyaka hō..

rājana dīnhē hāthī, rāninha hāra hō. bhari gē ratana padāratha sūpa hajāra
hō..16..

At that time, large quantum of gifts of different kinds were given liberally to everyone according to his or her eligibility, needs and status.

Tulsidas says that he has nothing to offer but his own self, so he does so as he remembers the wonderful and enchanting image of Raghunayak, the chief of king Raghu's race, i.e. his Lord, Sri Ram.

The king (Dasrath) gifted elephants, and the queens gifted necklaces. The gifts were so liberally given that thousands of 'Soops' (a winnowing basket) were filled and overflowed with precious gems and priceless stones. (16)

[Note—It is not mentioned in the verse exactly to whom these gifts were given. But the tradition is that the barber's wife who cleans the feet of the groom and cuts his nails gets the largest share. But the king was very generous, so he also gave other women who were waiting for their turn to receive gifts. They have been listed earlier in verse nos. 5-8—the iron smith's wife, the milkmaid, the betel-leaf seller's wife, the tailor's wife, the cobbler's wife, the gardener's wife, the washer-man's wife, and then finally the barber's wife. Not only them, there must have been hundreds of others queuing up to receive gifts, and hence it is certain that all of them were given liberal gifts.]

भरि गाड़ी नेवछावरि नाउ लेइ आवइ हो ।

परिजन करहि निहाल असीसत आवइ हो ॥

तापर करहिं सुमौज बहुत दुख खोवहिं हो ।

होइ सुखी सब लोग अधिक सुख सोवहिं हो ॥17॥

bhari gārī nēvachāvari nā'u lē'i āva'i hō. parijana karahi nihāla asīsata āva'i hō..

tāpara karahim sumauja bahuta dukha khōvahirim hō. hō'i sukhī saba lōga adhika sukha sōvahirim hō..17..

The barber collected all the gifts on his cart and started on his way home. On the way he generously gave away whatever was asked from him by his relatives, kith and kin who blessed him profusely.

[The occasion was of Lord Ram's marriage, and so everyone was exceptionally happy. Whatever they got as gifts themselves, they didn't hesitate in sharing them with others who approached them to bless them and laud their good luck. A same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas in the context of the celebrations that followed the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers. It is said in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194 that—"Everyone gave away as charity whatever they had; no one kept anything for himself. Even those who got them immediately gave them to others."]

By giving away to others the gifts that the barber had received (from the king), he felt very happy and contented. Everyone was joyful and happy, and they slept peacefully that night. [This 'sleeping peacefully' is a figure of speech to mean that everyone was satisfied and happy. No one was left wanting anything. There was no jealousy and ill-will amongst the alms seekers as is normally the case, because all of them were fully satisfied.] (17)

गावहिं सब रनिवास देहिं प्रभु गारी हो ।

राम लला सकुचाहिं देखि महतारी हो ॥

हिलिमिलि करत सवाँग 'सभा रस केलि' हो ।

नाउनि मन हरषाइ सुगंधन मेलि हो ॥18॥

gāvahirim saba ranivāsa dēhim prabhu gārī hō. rāma lalā sakucāhirim dēkhi mahatārī hō..

hilimili karata savāmṅga 'sabhā rasa kēli' hō. nā'uni mana haraṣā'i sugandhana mēli hō..18..

Everyone in the royal palace sang jovial songs, and used lyrics that teased Lord Ram. The Lord felt shy when he heard these songs, and occasionally glanced abashedly at his mother (as if to say 'why don't you stop these ladies from taunting me and singing such songs that are making me uneasy'. The mother, however, responded by merely smiling

back as she knew that it was just a tradition and these songs were not meant to be anything serious.)

There was fun and flocking in the royal household that night, and everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

The barber's wife feels happy as she cheerfully sprayed exquisite scents and exotic perfumes on the assembly. [This statement shows that the barber's wife stayed back to join the rest of the royal ladies in the celebrations that followed the ritual of the 'Nahachu'. Though it is not mentioned here clearly, all the other women listed in verse nos. 5-8 must also have stayed back as the palaces of great kings had a huge retinue of servants and attendants.] (18)

दूलह कै महतारी देखि मन हरषइ हो ।

कोटिन्ह दीन्हेउ दान मेघ जनु बरषइ हो ॥

रामलला कर नहछू अतिसुख गाइय हो ।

जेहि गाये सिद्धि होइ परम निधि पाइय हो ॥19॥

dūlahā kai mahatārī dēkhi mana haraṣa'i hō. kōṭinha dīnhē'u dāna mēgha janu barāḍḍha'i hō..

rāmalalā kara nahachū atisukha gā'iya hō. jēhi gāyē sid'dhi hō'i parama nidhi pā'iya hō..19..

The mother (Kaushalya) was very contented and exhilarated as she watched her dear son (Lord Ram) dressed and decked up as a groom. She was so happy that she gave liberal donations which resembled the rain falling from the cloud. [That is, just like the rain falling from the cloud liberally provides the earth with water to such an extent that all the crevices and gaps in it are choked and the surplus rain-water begins to flow on the surface of the earth in streams, the donations made by Kaushalya were also huge and countless.]

One should cheerfully sing these verses related to the 'Nahachu' ceremony of Lord Ram as it provides success in attaining all sorts of 'Siddhis' (success in any enterprise) as well as the 'Param Nidhi' (the supreme asset in the form of mental and spiritual peace and happiness). (19)

दसरथ राउ सिंहासन बैठि बिराजहिं हो ।

तुलसिदास बलि जाहि देखि रघुराजहि हो ॥

जे यह नहछू गावैं गाइ सुनावैं हो ।

रिद्धि—सिद्धि कल्याण मुकुति नर पावैं हो ॥20॥

dasaratha rā'u sirnhāsana baiṭhi birājahiṁ hō. tulasidāsa bali jāhi dēkhi
raghurājahi hō..

jē yaha nahachū gāvairiṁ gā'i sunāva'im̐ hō. rid'dhi-sid'dhi kalyāna mukuti nara
pāva'im̐ hō..20..

King Dasrath is sitting on a majestic throne. Tulsidas says that he sacrifices himself at this sight of 'Raghuraaaj*' (literally meaning the king of the Raghu dynasty) to show his respect and honour for him because he (the king) was so lucky and privileged to have Lord Ram (the incarnate Supreme Being) as his son, and was able to call himself the Lord's 'father'.

[*There is another interpretation of this part of the verse. The word 'Raghuraaaj' is profusely used by Tulsidas to mean Lord Ram in all his texts. So, if we take this meaning into consideration, then the whole interpretation changes. Then this 2nd line would mean—"Tulsidas watches Lord Ram (Raghuraaaj)—who must have been sitting by the side of his father, king Dasrath, on the throne—and feels so ecstatic and happy that he (Tulsidas) sacrifices himself at this sight. He feels overwhelmed with joy at this sight, and in order to express his gratitude he offers himself because it is the greatest of sacrifices and gifts one can give."]

Those people who sing themselves the verses of this collection of verses known as 'Ram Lala Nahachu', and make others sing them, are able to obtain all sorts of 'Riddhis' (material objects in this world) and 'Siddhis' (mystical powers). They also have all welfare for themselves while alive, and upon death they attain liberation and deliverance for their souls. (20)

Thus ends this classical composition known as 'Rāmalalā Nahachū' of Goswami Tulsidas.

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PART—2/Section-3

Goswami Tulsidas'

“Geetawali Ramayan”

(Baal Kand, from verse no. 47 to verse no. 110)

The story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita has been beautifully and elaborately narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in his rendering of the story of the Ramayan in his classical “Book of Songs” known as “Geetawali”. It is narrated in Baal Kand, from verse no. 1/47—to 1/110.

Below we shall read the full text of Geetawali that deal with this theme of Lord Ram's marriage.

विश्वामित्रजीका आगमन

राग सारंग

(1 / 47)

चहत महामुनि जाग जयो ।
नीच निसाचर देत दुसह दुख, कृस तनु ताप तयो ॥ 1 ॥
सापे पाप, नये निदरत खल, तब यह मंत्र ठयो ।
बिप्र—साधु—सुर—धेनु—धरनि—हित हरि अवतार लयो ॥ 2 ॥
सुमिरत श्रीसारंगपानि छनमें सब सोच गयो ।
चले मुदित कौसिक कोसलपुर, सगुननि साथ दयो ॥ 3 ॥
करत मनोरथ जात पुलकि, प्रगटत आनंद नयो ।
तुलसी प्रभु—अनुराग उमगि मग मंगल मूल भयो ॥ 4 ॥

viśvāmitrajī kā āgamana

rāga sārāṅga

(1/47)

cahata mahāmuni jāga jayō.
nīca nisācara dēta dusaha dukha, kṛṣa tanu tāpa tayō.. 1..

sāpē pāpa, nayē nidarata khala, taba yaha mantra ṭhayō.
 bipra-sādhū-sura-dhēnu-dharani-hita hari avatāra layō.. 2..
 sumirata śrīsāraṅgapāni chanamēm saba sōca gayō.
 calē mudita kausika kōsalapura, sagunani sātha dayō.. 3..
 karata manōratha jāta pulaki, pragaṭata ānanda nayō.
 tulasī prabhu-anurāga umagi maga maṅgala mūla bhayō.. 4..

Arrival of sage Vishwamitra at Ayodhya-1

Verse no. 1/47—[From now onwards we shall be reading about the next phase in Lord Ram's divine story which marks the end of the narrative of his early childhood days and starts the narrative of his first encounter with the demons and his first experience of the life in a dense forest. It is a sort of a prelude that would prepare the Lord for what he could expect when the real front opens a little while later when he is destined to go to the forest to fulfill his promise made to the Gods, Mother Earth and Sages that he would eliminate the terror of the demons.

In this first sojourn into the wild forest, the Lord is under the protection of the mighty sage Vishwamitra who had immense mystical powers to ensure no harm could ever come to Lord Ram under any circumstance. It would be a training course for the Lord so that he would be fully prepared to face the full force of the might and wrath of the demons alone later on.

It so happened that sage Vishwamitra could not complete his fire sacrifice because it was being continuously defiled by the demons. Had he wished, the sage could have vanquished the demons himself, but he had taken a vow that he would not be angry and curse anyone during the process of the fire sacrifice. So he had to restrain himself. What was to be done then?

The all-knowing sage realized that Lord Vishnu had come down to earth as Lord Ram with the express mandate to eliminate the demons. So here was his chance. Hence, he decided to visit Ayodhya and bring Lord Ram to his hermitage so that the process of elimination of demons gets rolling.

Sage Vishwamitra used this excuse of protection of his fire sacrifice to bring about a union between two cosmic forces that was necessary to accomplish success in the fulfillment of the Great Mission which was the elimination of the demons—and this union was to be in the form of a 'marriage' of Lord Ram and Sita. The added bonus for this great sage was an opportunity to make himself eternal and an integral part of the Lord's divine story because he had become instrumental in Lord Ram's marriage with Sita, about which we shall read a little while later in this chapter, from verse nos. 1/61—to 1/108.

Besides this, there were some mystical weapons about which only Vishwamitra knew, and these had to be given to Lord Ram so that the demons were successfully defeated. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/54, stanza no. 6 herein below.

Further, the sage thought that this would give him an opportunity to extend his own love and affection to the Lord, a privilege so far enjoyed only by his rival sage

Vasistha who was the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya. In fact in the entire story of the Ramayan, only two sages had had the privilege of caring for Lord Ram as he were their son—on was sage Vishwamitra, and the other was sage Valmiki.

Sage Vishwamitra showered his love on the two brothers as if he was their own father, and we shall be soon reading how ecstatic he was at having Lord Ram and Laxman entrusted to his care as if he was their own father—refer: verse no. 1/54, stanza no. 2; no. 1/55, stanza no. 7 of this chapter herein below. The fact is he is the only sage in the entire story of the Ramayan who was honoured with the privilege of treating the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, as his own sons. And this honour was officially bestowed upon him by king Dasrath himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208; and Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/51, stanza no. 2. Hence, henceforth sage Vishwamitra would act as a foster father of Lord Ram and Laxman.

The second sage was Valmiki to whose hermitage Sita, the noble wife of Lord Ram, was sent to spend her time in forest exile. The great and loving sage welcomed her and treated her like his own daughter, not letting her feel that she was alone and in an alien place. It was here that Sita's two sons Lava and Kush were born. This story will be narrated in this book's (Geetawali's) Uttar Kand, from verse no. 7/34—to verse no. 7/36.

That said, now let us read on with the story as it unfolds below.]

Sage Vishwamitra wishes to complete his fire-sacrifice, but the demons interfere, molest and desecrate it continuously with great impunity, as a result of which the sage is getting emaciated due to worry (1).

He is in a great moral dilemma. If he curses the demons, that will be sinful (because getting angry and cursing is not becoming of a saint of Vishwamitra's stature, and especially when he has taken a vow of remaining calm and observing austerity and penance while engaged in the fire sacrifice). And if he tolerates them, there seem to be no end to the demon's torments. So he thought to himself—'Sri Hari has taken a form (as an incarnation of Lord Ram) for the benefit of the Brahmins, the sages and hermits, the pious ones, the Gods, the holy cows and the mother earth.' (I must therefore approach him to liberate me from this daily suffering at the hands of demons) (2).

Thinking thus, he was delighted, and proceeded towards Ayodhya eagerly. At this time, there were many good omens (to indicate to him that his visit would be fruitful) (3).

On the way, he mentally made many hopes and expectations. during such moments there was a thrill in his body which created renewed happiness and bliss (in the heart of the sage).

Tulsidas says that the thrill and surge of affection for the Lord made the path very auspicious and welfare-providing for the sage¹ (4).

[¹Sage Vishwamitra knew who Lord Ram was and what the Lord's mission was. It was this knowledge that prevailed upon him and motivated him to visit Ayodhya and bring the Lord to his hermitage so that the process of the elimination of the demons could be set in motion.

So, well aware of the destiny from Eternity that fore-ordained his role in being the first one to introduce Lord Ram to the danger posed by the demons and how they were tyrannising sages and humble creatures of the world, as also the need to transfer certain mystical weapons that this sage exclusively possessed into the hands of Lord Ram so that the Lord is armed to fight and slay the demons, the sage could not but feel exceedingly honoured and privileged when he set out of his hermitage to make the journey to Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 206.

His excitement and ecstasy knew no bounds, and his steps were so light and quick and nimble as if he were kind of flying with wings.

So lost was the sage in his own thoughts and thanking his luck and destiny that has brought this day to him, and of the honour and privilege that would soon be his for the askin, and so submerged he was in buffeting waves of emotions and love for Lord Ram that were billowing in his heart that he appeared like a ship speeding with a exceeding speed towards its destination, almost keeling on its side to keep pace with the demands of the waves and the wind that fills its sails to aid and abet and push it towards its destination as is its wont!]

[Note—The episode narrating arrival of sage Vishwamitra to take Lord Ram and Laxman with him, and the subsequent developments leading to the killing of demons who were tormenting him have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.]

(1 / 48)

आजु सकल सुकृत फलु पाइहौं ।
 सुखकी सीव, अवधि आनंदकी अवध बिलोकि हौं पाइहौं ॥ 1 ॥
 सुतनि सहित दसरथहि देखिहौं, प्रेम पुलकि उर लाइहौं ।
 रामचंद्र—मुखचंद्र—सुधा—छबि नयन—चकोरनि प्याइहौं ॥ 2 ॥
 सादर समाचार नृप बुझिहैं, हौं सब कथा सुनाइहौं ।
 तुलसी है कृतकृत्य आश्रमहिं राम लषन लै आइहौं ॥ 3 ॥

(1/48)

āju sakala sukr̥ta phalu pā'ihaur̥m.
 sukhakī sīva, avadhi ānam̐dakī avadha bilōki haur̥m pā'ihaur̥m.. 1..
 sutani sahita dasarathahi dēkhihaur̥m, prēma pulaki ura lā'ihaur̥m.
 rāmacandra-mukhacandra-sudhā-chabi nayana-cakōrani pyā'ihaur̥m.. 2..
 sādara samācāra nr̥pa bujhihair̥m, haur̥m saba kathā sunā'ihaur̥m.
 tulasī hvai kr̥takr̥tya āśramahir̥m rāma laṣana lai ā'ihaur̥m.. 3..

Arrival of sage Vishwamitra at Ayodhya-2

Verse no. 1/48—[This verse continues the narrative of the previous verse no. 1/47 of sage Vishwamitra's ecstasy and exhilaration as he wended his way towards Ayodhya. The sage felt and knew that he was on a divine mission and a pilgrimage to a holy place that was praised in the scriptures and which was selected by Lord Ram to be his residence during the Lord's worldly sojourn.

The great sage thought in himself that when he brings Lord Ram to his hermitage and initiates the process of elimination of demons, he would symbolically be starting the 'Great Sacrifice' with the noble aim of eliminating the demons and freeing the world of their cruelty and tyranny. And he was so lucky that in this 'Great Sacrifice' he would preside over as the 'head priest'! Nay, not only this, it would be much more than that—for he would be doing what the Gods themselves couldn't accomplish for the fear of the wrath of demons!

There were many additional bonus-honours that awaited him—for he would be remembered as the 'foster father' of Lord Ram, which privilege no living being had except Dasrath who, by exceptional good luck of his and the merits he had accumulated, was honoured to be the Lord's 'temporal father'; for he would be instrumental in bringing about a union between Lord Ram and Sita who were personified forms of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and his Shakti, the cosmic dynamic powers of Brahm that enables Brahm to do what he does; and to—and this was utmost important for Vishwamitra and dearest of the dear wont of his heart—shower his unobstructed and unhindered and undiluted and unstinted love and affection to his beloved Lord!

Hence, even as he was moving on the ground he appeared to be flying as if carried on wings on clouds moving without obstacles of the land. He was muttering to himself in ecstasy as if a man possessed—smiling now and tears welling up and rolling down his cheeks at another moment; walking as fast as his aged legs would carry him now, and slowing down a moment later to a snail's pace as his mind lost awareness of whither he was going and whether his legs were moving at all, almost paralysing them!

Indeed, such was the great sage Vishwamitra's ecstatic reverie!]

'Today I shall get the reward of all my good, meritorious and virtuous deeds because I shall have a look at Ayodhya which is a hall-mark (standard, limit) of happiness as well as passing through the times of rejoicing and exhilaration¹ (1).

[¹This was the time when there were unstopped celebrations in Ayodhya. The wise and all-knowing sage knew that all this would be short-lived in the light of what was to come in the days ahead—when this same city would be plunged in gloom of the gravest kind once Lord Ram would leave it to go to the forest to fulfil his mission of slaying the demons. Hence, this was the right time to visit it.]

I shall see king Dasrath along with his sons, and shall embrace him with affection causing a thrill on my body².

Besides, I shall also make the Chakors representing my eyes drink the nectar in the form of captivating and beautiful image of Lord Sri Ram's moon-like face (2).

[²Sage Vishwamitra would be thrilled on embracing king Dasrath because the king was the most honoured and lucky man alive at the time—for the simple reason that he was blessed by the Lord to become his father on earth. And soon we shall read that this same thrill and ecstasy filled Vishwamitra when he learnt that this rare privilege—of

being called 'father of Lord Ram'—would pass on to him. Refer: verse no. 1/51, stanza no. 2; no. 1/54, stanza no. 2; no. 1/55, stanza no. 7 herein below.]

The king shall ask me about my welfare and then I shall tell him the whole story (regarding the purpose of my visit).'

Tulsidas continues to describe the ecstatic state of Vishwamitra's thought when the sage talked to himself thus: 'Then I shall most obligingly bring Sri Ram and Laxman to my Ashram (hermitage).'³ (3).

[³It is to be noted that this last thought—that Lord Ram and Laxman would come with Vishwamitra to his hermitage—has been separated from the rest of the narrative. It is to highlight that when this thought came to the sage, his ecstasy and joy knew no bounds.]

राग नट

(1 / 49)

देखि मुनि! रावरे पद आज ।
 भयो प्रथम गनतीमें अबतैं हौं जहँ लौं साधु समाज ॥ 1 ॥
 चरन बंदि, कर जोरि निहोरत, 'कहिय कृपा करि काज ।
 मेरे कछु न अदेय राम बिनु, देह-गेह सब राज' ॥ 2 ॥
 भली कही भूपति त्रिभुवनमें को सुकृती-सिरताज ? ।
 तुलसि राम-जनमहितें जनियत सकल सुकृत को साज ॥ 3 ॥

rāga naṭa

(1/49)

dēkhi muni! rāvarē pada āja.
 bhayō prathama ganatīmērṁ abatērṁ haurṁ jaham' laurṁ sādhu samāja.. 1..
 carana bandi, kara jōri nihōrata, 'kahiya kṛpā kari kāja.
 mērē kachu na adēya rāma binu, dēha-gēha saba rāja'.. 2..
 bhalī kahī bhūpati tribhuvanamērṁ kō sukrṭī-siratāja?.
 tulasi rāma-janamahitērṁ janiyata sakala sukrṭa kō sāja.. 3..

Sage Vishwamitra in king Dasrath's Court

Verse no. 1/49—[Finally, sage Vishwamitra reached Ayodhya. He took a bath in the holy river Saryu and went to the court of king Dasrath and sought his audience. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 206.

The court messengers and royal guards swiftly went in and reported to the king about the great sage's arrival. King Dasrath felt he was highly honoured by the sage's visit because Vishwamitra did not usually went to visit kings and seek anything from them. Dasrath thought that the sage had come to bless him and his sons now as he hadn't come earlier during the celebrations marking Lord Ram's birth. So the king immediately got up and hurriedly prepared to welcome the sage warmly with the greatest of honours and reverence.]

[King Dasrath said—] 'Oh great Sage! Seeing today your lotus-like revered feet I am feeling highly honoured, and have become most high, fortunate and exalted in the realm that extends to as far as where all those who are pious, pure-hearted and noble (*sādhū samāja*) abide¹ (1).

[¹The king welcomed the great sage with the warmest of welcomes and the greatest of reverence, saying—"Oh Sage! A mighty blessing hath descended upon us by thy footsteps coming to mine place, which is now purified and madeth honourable by thine presence. There is verily naught better and goodness of fortune than this."]

Thereafter, he worshipped the sage's feet, bent his hands at the elbow and brought his palms together (as a gesture of showing high respect, to worship, show reverence as a token of submission), and requested the sage, 'Oh sage! Please be kind to tell me the purpose of your visit. Excepting Ram, there is nothing that I can't give you, whether it be my body, my household, my entire kingdom or any other thing which you desire.'² (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 207; and Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 208.

When the sage was ushered in the royal court, shown warm welcome, worshipped with due honours, and seated, the king said—"Oh great Sage! It is my honour and privilege to have you today with me. It's indeed a blessed coming. But tell me oh sage, besides thine wont to bless mine family and kingdom and bestow upon us the rare honour of thine august presence amongst us, what else is thine wont that bringeth thee here to me? Tell me thine errand that I may fulfil it to thee and requite it for thine pleasure, with one exception for which I beg thine pardon and excuse. Ram is dearest to mine heart more than mine life, and other than that nothing is there that I cannot submit to thee for thy pleasure. Oh Sage! Thine good name, beneficence, magnanimity, benevolence, grace and compassion are of the legends, and they are well known in all the realms and climes and countries as far as where the sun rises and the moon sets. So sage—tell me thine requirement and acquaint me with thine tale. And if its accomplishment be in mine power I wilt straightaway accomplish it to thee and spare thee the toil and trouble which hath bringeth thee hither. And Lord help me that there is nothing that can't be accomplished by thine blessings, with the exception of thy seeking the hands of Ram from me, for that would singe the life out mine soul.

So therefore oh Sage, as the saying says—"Thou wouldest be complied with if thou ask that which can be readily supplied"—be sooth, graceful, merciful, considerate, reasonable and compassionate in thy asking."]

Tulsidas says that sage Vishwamitra replied to the king as follows—'Oh King of the age and sovereign of the realm (*bhūpati*)! What you have just said (in stanza no. 1) is correct and true. Indeed, who is more exalted in virtues, accomplished in good deeds, high in auspiciousness and exalted in nobility (*sukṛti-siratāja*) in the entire world and its three divisions (*tribhuvanamēm*)² than you are? The clear evidence of this is in the birth of Lord Sri Ram in your household, as your son. What more proof is needed? (*rāma-janamahitēm janiyata sakala sukṛta kō sāja*)³ (3).

[²The 'Tribhuvan' refers to the three divisions of the world—the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

³The sage reciprocated king Dasrath's graceful words by praising the latter for his good fortune and meritorious deeds that entitled him to become eligible to have the Lord of the entire world as his son.]

(1 / 50)

राजन! राम-लषन जो दीजै ।
जस रावरो, लाभ ढोटनिहूँ, मुनि सनाथ सब कीजै ॥ 1 ॥
डरपत हौ साँचे सनेह-बस सुत-प्रभाव बिनु जाने ।
बूझिय बामदेव अरु कुलगुरु, तुम पुनि परम सयाने ॥ 2 ॥
रिपु रन दलि, मख राखि, कुसल अति अलप दिननि घर ऐहैं ।
तुलसिदास रघुबंसतिलककी कबिकुल कीरति गैहैं ॥ 3 ॥

(1/50)

rājana! rāma-laṣana jō dijai.
jasa rāvarō, lābha ḍhōṭanihūṁ, muni sanātha saba kījai.. 1..
ḍarapata hau sāmṇcē sanēha-basa suta-prabhāva binu jānē.
būjhiya bāmadēva aru kulaguru, tuma puni parama sayānē.. 2..
ripu rana dali, makha rākhi, kusala ati alapa dinani ghara aihaiṁ.
tulasidāsa raghubansatilakakī kabikula kīrati gaihairṁ.. 3..

Request of Vishwamitra for allowing Lord Ram & Laxman to be sent with him-1

Verse no. 1/50—Pleading with King Dasrath to give Lord Ram to him, the sage (Vishwamitra) exhorted him—'Oh King, if you vouchsafe Lord Ram and Sri Laxman to me then in all sooth I say (and assure you) that there is no gainsay in that not only will you acquire good fame and the honour of obliging a sage, but these two divine brothers would also greatly benefit from it¹ (1).'

[¹Sage Vishwamitra knew about the reluctance of king Dasrath in sending Lord Ram and Laxman with him—refer: Verse no. 1/49, stanza no. 2. So he now points out the

benefits and merits that would accrue to Dasrath if he gives his consent in order to politely persuade the king to abandon his stubbornness and realize that the princes have grown up to become adults and they must now be allowed to step in the open world and make a mark of their own instead of living under the liege and shadow of the great name of the family and their father.

The king must realize that his two sons would be absolutely secure under the protective umbrella of the mightily able sage of the stature of Vishwamitra. Nay, they would be safer with Vishwamitra than even when with their own father, Dasrath.

And did not the king realize that excessive of pampering and tenderness in dealings and softness of life and easiness of comforts would make the princes weak and fragile and susceptible to unsettling contingencies and inconsistencies of future life for which they wouldn't be emotionally and mentally prepared, and they would not be prepared to face the turmoil and hardships that would come their way once the king dies and they inherit the burden of the kingdom with all its thorny problems and troubling troubles and uncertainties of the most unpredicable kinds.

A wise father is one who would not dither in training his sons to face the world and step out of their cradles so that when death overcomes the sire and trounces him, his blood-linkness and heirs are not found wanting, but would stand in the stead of their sire and be more worthy than the sire himself.]

[The sage continued—] 'It seemeth to me that you are afraid and hesitant and reluctant and apprehensive in vouchsafing them (Lord Ram and Laxman) to me because you do not know their true nature, their qualities or qualifications, and who they actually are².

Therefore, oh good King, you would do good and be well-advised if you would kindly consult sage Baamdeo as well as your own court priest and family preacher (Guru) sage Vasistha on this issue³ (2).'

[²The sage meant—"Oh King! You think that these two brothers are your sons and that you are responsible for their security, and that they might come to harm if you send them with me. Its alright of you as any father would feel likewise. But on one point you err—You don't know that Lord Ram is not an ordinary human being that you think him to be because you have become so deluded and swept away in your love and affection for him. You have forgotten that you had done severe Tapa or penance in some ancient time when you were born as Manu, and you had been rewarded with a divine sight of Lord Vishnu who asked you to seek from him what your heart desired. Then you and your wife, Satrupa, had begged of the Lord the privilege of having the Lord born as your son. Why say, don't you remember it." Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 152.

"Oh king—don't act like an ill-advised and dumb-in-wit king who is so short of sight that he can't see the things with the correct and larger perspective in view, and of the greater objective that would be of larger and abiding benefit to him in the long run by being over-passionate, over-possessive, miserly and stingy about the diminutive pleasure and comfort of the present at the peril of the future.

You must understand that sons of great kings must be trained to face troubles and tribulations of life as there are in the field, and not rendered fragile and delicate by confining them the shadowed life of pleasures of the palace and comforts of the kingdom

for it would make them susceptible to fear and cowardice and indecisiveness in the face of the harsh realities of life one day when they ascend the throne in stead of their sire and inherit the responsibility of the kingdom which is a mighty burden for which an able shoulder is needed. Remember oh king that the toil, the turmoil and the calamities of life only go to train and strengthen the sons of great kings in practice, and instill in them the resolution to face and overcome all oppositions boldly and with courage as only these virtues would strengthen and lent shine to their mettle and make him the greatest amongst the kings and emperors of his time whom no one dareth challenge or contradict.”

³The sage continued—“Oh King! A king keeps good advisors with him just for an eventuality as this. For in the event when he is indecisive or faces a dilemma, his wise and learned advisors give him good council and ensure that the king is not brought to some peril. Look—don’t take me lightly for I am not of the kind who plays matters light and without weight. I have not come hither to beg of alms or seek largesse from you. Remember: I am fully capable of superceding your objections and having my say reign supreme, but still I beg before you in all humility and submission so that the credit and the fame of assenting to a sage’s request will all be yours.

And King, you must know why I am of the wont to take Lord Ram and Sri Laxman with me. This you haven’t asked. So listen carefully—”]

[In order to overcome Dasrath’s reservations and apprehensions that made him reluctant in sending Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman with him, sage Vishwamitra reassured the king as follows—] ‘And verily I assure you oh King, and foresay I say in all sooth that they (Lord Ram and Sri Laxman) would slay the demons and protect my fire-sacrifice. [Don’t doubt it.] Once done, then they would soon come back to thee at Ayodhya (and its my word of honour and promise to you, a stable trust and covenant of a sage that never goes void and is never violated).⁴

[⁴The sage sought to reassure king Dasrath and remove his apprehension that he is not taking the two princes to his hermitage to make them his disciples. No not at all. Once the job and stated objective is accomplished, it is the word-of-honour of sage Vishwamitra that he would send the two brothers home to Ayodhya. It is just like a short-term outing for the two princes.

“Let them come with me”, said the sage, “and I promise you to send them back to you as soon as possible. And I needest not remind thou of this that thine two sons wildest not come empty-handed to thee without being blessed and handsomely rewarded as doth thou not knowest that a sage liketh of me wouldest naught allow anyone to helpst him and bearest his burden without grant of adequate compensation and requital? And remember: Since this compensation would be for the protection of a fire sacrifice and be awarded for helping a sage, the reward would be likewise compensate in its grandness and in manifold of its virtues.”]

Tulsidas adds from his side, saying—“The sage added: ‘Oh king! If you do so, the poets and bards will sing the glories and praises of Lord Ram and Sri Laxman for all times to come.’ ”⁵ (3).

[⁵The last stanza can be read as follows also—Tulsidas says that the sage told the king further—“Oh king! If you pay heed to my advice and send the two brothers with me then the noble and valiant deeds of the two brothers that I foresay in all sooth and

assurance that they wouldst surely doest—like the valiant and gallant deed of the killing of the demons, and the noble and most honourable deed of successful completion of the fire sacrifice of sages that is yet incomplete—will make them famous and renowned and established for eternity that is to come so much so that their glories and achievements would be the subject of praises and laurels and paeans that would be remembered and retold and sung as poems and songs of lore by great poets and bards and minstrels for all times to come and in all the corners of the world.”]

(1 / 51)

रहे ठगिसे नृपति सुनि मुनिबरके बयन ।
 कहि न सकत कछु राम—प्रेमबस, पुलक गात, भरे नीर नयन ॥ 1 ॥
 गुरु बसिष्ठ समुझाय कह्यो तब हिय हरषाने, जाने सेष—सयन ।
 सौंपे सुत गहि पानि, पाँय परि, भूसुर उर चले उमँगि चयन ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसी प्रभु जोहत पोहत चित, सोहत मोहत कोटि मयन ।
 मधु—माधव—मूरति दोउ सँग मानो दिनमनि गवन कियो उतर अयन ॥ 3 ॥

(1/51)

rahē ṭhagisē nrpati suni munibarakē bayana.
 kahi na sakata kachu rāma-prēmabasa, pulaka gāta, bharē nīra nayana.. 1..
 guru basiṣṭha samujhāya kahyō taba hiya haraṣānē, jānē sēṣa-sayana.
 saumpē suta gahi pāni, pām̐ya pari, bhūsura ura calē umam̐gi cayana.. 2..
 tulasī prabhu jōhata pōhata cita, sōhata mōhata kōṭi mayana.
 madhu-mādhava-mūrati dō'u sam̐ga mām̐nō dinamani gavana kiyō utara ayana..
 3..

Request of Vishwamitra for allowing Lord Ram & Laxman to be sent with him-2

Verse no. 1/51—Hearing sage Vishwamitra’s words, the king (Dasrath) was utterly speechless and flummoxed; he became dumbfounded and stunned as if a lightening had struck him. Overcome by love for Lord Sri Ram, he could not say a word and find a compense¹. His body became numbed and tears welled-up in his eyes (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208.

Though not mentioned here, the reason for Dasrath’s shock and why this request was too difficult to be accepted has been laid out in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 5-6 that precede Doha no. 208. The king explained to sage Vishwamitra thus: “Sage, I have been blessed with four sons in my ripe old age, at a time when I had lost all hopes of ever being able to enjoy this fruit of my life that I, to the best

of knowledge, have spent righteously and nobly. Oh Brahmin (“Vipra”)! You have uttered words without thought and consideration and applying wisdom. You did not realise the import of your demand and whether or not it would be possible for the person from whom such demand is made to meet it. All my four sons are equally dear to me and it is not possible for me to vouchsafe Ram to you. (And I beseech you also therefore not to force upon me an alternative by asking me to send Bharat and Shatrughan in lieu of Ram and Laxman). Its incredulous to imagine that you would make such a request in view of the immensity of the hazards that would befall my sons, for you say that ‘Sri Ram will slay the demons’. Nay, this is unimaginable for me to give assent to: for on the one hand are the most ferocious, formidable and spine-chilling demons of the sternest and toughest kind, and on the other hand are these beautiful princes who are extremely delicate and of a tender age. So therefore, oh gracious sage, please forgive and excuse me.”]

When the royal priest, sage Guru Vasistha, observed the perplexities and dilemmas that Dasrath found himself in, the wise sage stepped-in to give wise council and reassure the king that everything would be alright and that he should not at all be worried by explaining the reality of the things to him².

As a result of this advice and wisdom imparted to him by his teacher and advisor sage Vasistha, the king came to his senses³ and realised the true nature of Lord Ram as being an incarnation (manifestation) of the Lord God (Vishnu) who reclines on the legendary Sheshnath (the legendary celestial serpent) on the cosmic ocean of milk known as the Kshir Sagar. So he felt extremely glad and honoured in his heart (at being fortunate enough to become the Lord’s temporal father).

Thereafter, the king, most willingly and cheerfully, held the hands of the two brothers and handed them over to sage Vishwamitra even as he fell on the feet of the sage⁴.

At this (i.e. when the king politely handed over the two brothers to the sage), a sense of great and unbound happiness, of immense bliss, exhilaration and extreme ecstasy began to surge in the sage’s heart (like an ocean rising and heaving with billowing waves during the time of its tide at the sight of the full moon)⁵. (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

The wise sage Vasistha enlightened the king that his son Ram was no ordinary prince, but he is the Supreme Being himself incarnate, and that his main objective of coming to the earth is getting rid of the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.

The king himself was a very righteous and holy man, and he had always fought for upholding the laws of Dharma—the laws of righteousness and correct behaviour. He had often in the past fought on the side of the Gods against their enemies, the demons. Now therefore he should not be a hindrance in the work of the Gods by being sentimental and too obsessive and possessive with a physical form of the Lord as his child. Rather, he should willingly tell Ram and Laxman to accompany sage Vishwamitra so that the noble objective of the Lord’s incarnation be fulfilled. He should not act childish and in a worldly manner, but as a noble king who would sacrifice everything in his possession and ability if Dharma needs protection.

Besides this, the king must realize that Vishwamitra was not an ordinary sage, as he has within his reach such mystical weapons that are envy of even the Gods. If Vishwamitra needs his fire sacrifice to be protected then there are very good chances that he would divulge the secret of these weapons to Lord Ram so that the mission can be successfully accomplished. And is it not obvious to the king that in this eventuality his son, Lord Ram, would then be the only one in this world who would be in possession of these great weapons that would stand him in good stead when he takes over the reigns of the kingdom from his father? It would make Ram invincible and the vanquisher of all his enemies! Which father and king would not like this to happen?

Further, sage Vasistha counseled Dasrath that he, Vasistha, was fully aware of the abilities and prowess of Vishwamitra and can vouch for him. The two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, are much safer with Vishwamitra than anywhere else in this world, even not so much while being protected by the full might of Dasrath's army.

And then there is a horrendous peril that faces Dasrath in the face in the eventuality of his stubborn refusal to oblige Vishwamitra. Has the king considered what would come to pass should the sage become wrathful, and losing his self-control curse the king and his sons with only God knows whatso.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

When sage Vasistha ceased speaking, king Dasrath much profited from it. He summoned up his reasoning powers and cleansed his heart of doubts and consternations and reluctance, causing his understanding to revert to his former self when he had prayed to the almighty Lord to bless him with the grant of the boon so that he may be honoured with the rarest of rare privilege of having the Lord as his child, and said to himself—“Indeed, ‘tis in mine good that I rise above the petty and consider things from a higher perspective, for what my Guru has saith is in sooth the fact of the matter. Verily, I must give my consent forthwith, not as an obligation on sage Vishwamitra but as an honour on mine whole family.”

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10.

At the time of handing Lord Ram and Laxman to sage Vishwamitra, king Dasrath, their worldly father, told the sage: “Oh great and compassionate Sage! Verily, these two brothers art like life for me. And from this forwardtime thou art their ‘father’. So wherefore oh sage, careth for them as if they wert thine sons.”

The gesture of falling at the sage's feet has many connotations. It is a token of total submission and a sign of humility, as a gesture of showing great reverence, honour and respect to the sage, and also to silently tell the sage that he is giving away to him what was more dear to heart than his own life just to honour the sanctity of the sage's words and in deference to his wishes. It also means that the king offered his beloved sons to the sage with a subtle request to take special care of Ram and Laxman who were merely boys of a tender age at that time. Henceforth, the safety and security, the welfare and well-being of these two princes would be in the kind hands of sage Vishwamitra.

Another reason for the king falling at the feet of sage Vishwamitra was to ask for forgiveness for his initial response of refusing to oblige the great sage. After all, he, the loving father, was overcome with shock and grief at the prospect of having to part with his dear sons at an advanced age, and at the unimaginable prospect of literally throwing

his sons to face the wolves in the form of blood-thirsty demons. It was a emotional and sentimental response of a loving father, and so king Dasrath beseeched sage Vishwamitra to understand his mental state and hence forgive him for his temerity to refuse the sage's request initially.

⁵It is natural to happen—for now the sage would have the unparalleled privilege and the good fortune to be very close to the Supreme Lord, and be the first sage with whom the Lord spent some of his time on earth. The sage was also happy that he would be playing a pivotal role in the divine objective for which Lord Vishnu manifested on the earth as a human being—which was being instrumental in getting the work of slaying the demons started in right earnest by getting the first group of demons who were disturbing his fire sacrifice killed. This was the first step in a long chain of such events that would ultimately culminate in the killing of the cruel demon king Ravana of Lanka. The sage surely felt privileged at being able to set the ball rolling and going down in history as the one who took the Lord by the hand to motivate him and prod him to do what he had come to do on this earth.]

Tulsidas says that Lord Sri Ram captivates and enthralls the mind and attention of all those who behold him due to the Lord's exceptional charm, attractiveness, radiance and beauty that outshines that of crores (millions) of Kamdeo/cupids taken together.

The sight of the image of the two sweet, attractive and lovely brothers (Ram and Laxman) alongside the sage (Vishwamitra) (*madhu-mādhava-mūratī dō'u samṅa*) as he took them with him to his hermitage reminds one of the splendorous Sun as it migrates north of the equator (during the summer solstice), accompanied by the two months of Chaitra [March-April] and Vaishaakh [May-June] in a personified form (*dō'u samṅa mānō dinamani gavana kiyō utara*)⁶ (3).

[⁶In this imagery, sage Vishwamitra represents the Sun, while the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, the two months mentioned in this stanza in their personified forms. This period is mid-summer when the Sun is at its brightest and most brilliant form. It indicates how Vishwamitra felt and appeared. His face shone like the sun; he was in his finest mood and fettle; and his glorious presence with the two brothers portended affright to the demons who would hide themselves just as the night retracts its self to the bare minimum of hours during summers when the days are exceptionally long.]

[Note—Though initially reluctant, Dasrath finally allowed Lord Ram and Laxman to accompany sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage in the forest. On the way the Lord met the demoness Tadka, who attacked them. The Lord killed this demoness with the least of effort. This was Lord Ram's first encounter with the demon race. At the sage's hermitage, the Lord protected the fire sacrifice by killing the demon army when it attacked, but he let off their chief Marich by hitting him with a headless arrow which flung the demon far away in the middle of the ocean. It was this demon who was later to become a golden deer and be instrumental in Sita's abduction by the demon king Ravana.

Then news came that a king named Janak was holding a marriage ceremony for his daughter Sita in which the condition for the marriage was a huge and strong bow of Lord Shiva that was in possession of the king. He declared that anyone who would lift it, string it, and pull it would be able to marry Sita. He sent an invitation to sage Vishwamitra. So the sage took Ram and Laxman when he went to attend the ceremony. On the way the Lord liberated Ahilya who was a chaste wife of sage Gautam but was converted into a stone due to some curse. Lord Ram touched her with his holy feet, and as soon as the dust of his feet touched her she was freed from her curse.

These episodes will soon be narrated as the story unfolds. Refer: Verse nos. 1/52—1/60 herein below.

They are also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 209—Doha no. 211.]

राग सारंग

(1 / 52)

ऋषि सँग हरषि चले दोउ भाई ।
 पितु-पद बंदि सीस लियो आयसु, सुनि सिष आसिष पाई ॥ 1 ॥
 नील पीत पाथोज बरन बपु, बय किसोर बनि आई ।
 सर धुन-पानि, पीत पट कटितट, कसे निखंग बनाई ॥ 2 ॥
 कलित कंठ मनि-माल, कलेवर चंदन खौरि सुहाई ।
 सुंदर बदन, सरोरुह-लोचन, मुखछबि बरनि न जाई ॥ 3 ॥
 पल्लव, पंख, सुमन सिर सोहत क्यों कहौं बेष-लुनाई ?
 मनु मूरति धरि उभय भाग भइ त्रिभुवन सुंदरताई ॥ 4 ॥
 पैठत सरनि, सिलनि चढ़ि चितवत, खग-मृग-बन रुचिराई ।
 सादर सभय सप्रेम पुलकि मुनि पुनि-पुनि लेत बुलाई ॥ 5 ॥
 एक तीर तकि हती ताडका, बिद्या बिप्र पढ़ाई ।
 राख्यो जग्य जीति रजनीचर, भइ जग-बिदित बड़ाई ॥ 6 ॥
 चरन-कमल-रज-परस अहल्या, निज पति-लोक पठाई ।
 तुलसिदास प्रभुके बूझे मुनि सुरसरि कथा सुनाई ॥ 7 ॥

rāga sārāṅga

(1/52)

r̥ṣi sam̐ga haraṣi calē dō'u bhā'ī.
 pitu-pada bandi sīsa liyō āyasu, suni siṣa āsiṣa pā'ī.. 1..
 nīla pīta pāthōja barana bapu, baya kisōra bani ā'ī.
 sara dhuna-pāni, pīta paṭa kaṭitaṭa, kasē nikhaṅga banā'ī.. 2..
 kalita kaṅṭha mani-māla, kalēvara candana khauri suhā'ī.
 suṁdara badana, sarōruha-lōcana, mukhachabi barani na jā'ī.. 3..
 pallava, paṅkha, sumana sira sōhata kyōm kahaur̥m bēṣa-lunā'ī?
 manu mūrati dhari ubhaya bhāga bha'i tribhuvana sundaratā'ī.. 4..
 paithata sarani, silani caḍhi citavata, khaga-mrga-bana rucirā'ī.
 sādara sabhaya saprēma pulaki muni puni-puni lēta bulā'ī.. 5..
 ēka tīra taki hatī tāḍakā, bidyā bipra paṛhā'ī.
 rākhyō jagya jīti rajanīcara, bha'i jaga-bidita baṛā'ī.. 6..
 carana-kamala-raja-parasa ahalyā, nija pati-lōka paṭhā'ī.

tulasidāsa prabhukē bījḥē muni surasari kathā sunā'ī.. 7..

[Vishwamitra departs for his Ashram; the Slaying of Tadka;
Liberation of Ahilya & Protection of Fire Sacrifice.]

The Charming & Splendid Portrait of Ram-Laxman with Vishwamitra-1

Verse no.1/52—The two brothers (Ram and Laxman) happily started on their journey with the sage (for his hermitage). They worshipped their father's feet (i.e. they touched his feet as a gesture of showing great respect to him and to take leave of him), cheerfully accepted his orders (to accompany the sage), heard his advices and wise council, and accepted his blessings (1).

The bodies of the two brothers are as beauteous and charming as a blue and a yellow lotus respectively, and they are in their teens¹.

A bow and an arrow adorn the hands of the two brothers, while a Pitambar and a quiver adorn their waists². (2).

[¹Since Lord Sri Ram is dark complexioned, he is like the blue lotus, and since Laxman is of a fair complexion he is likened to a yellow coloured flower.

²The brothers are each holding a bow and an arrow in their hands, and the yellow silk cloth known as the Pitambar as well as the quiver are tied around their waists.]

There is a gem-studded garland (necklace) around their charming and elegant necks, a light paste of sandalwood is smeared on their bodies, and it is not possible to describe in words the charm and the bewitching beauty of their enthralling image, of their beauteous face, of their general charming demeanours, and of their bewitching lotus-like eyes (3).

There are new (freshly plucked) leaves, (peacock) feathers and (colourful) flowers adorning their heads³.

Tulsidas says—‘How can I describe their enthralling charm and fascinating beauty? It appears to me that the best of the virtue of ‘beauty’ that exists anywhere in the entire Tribhuvan (the three worlds—subterranean, terrestrial and celestial) has divided itself in to two halves and manifested in the form of these two (brothers, Ram and Laxman)⁴. (4).

[³They have been tucked in the thick lock of hairs on their heads. Or it might also mean that freshly plucked leaves, peacock feathers and flowers are stuck in the crown that they are wearing.

⁴That is, the two brothers look so exceptionally charming and lovely that all the ‘beauty’ that exist in this creation seem to have personified themselves in their forms.]

En-route to the hermitage of the sage (Vishwamitra), the two brothers frolic around (as is the wont of children), sometimes entering (splashing or taking a dip into) lakes and other water bodies, and at other times climbing on the top of boulders and rocks, and as they

wended their way through the forest path and fared on cheerfully, they eagerly and excitedly watched the birds, the animals and the general beauty of the surrounding forest and countryside. The sage becomes worried and fearful (about their safety), and overwhelmed with affection for them he repeatedly summons them to come close to him and stop running away⁵ (5).

[⁵Like ordinary children going out for a picnic, the two brothers were very excited as they walked on either side of the great sage through the path of the wild forest. This was their first outing alone, without the customary retinue of servants and attendants and sons of nobles and notables and grandees of the realm accompanying them like a shadow. They felt easy and carefree and comfortable like a bird decaged for it was the first time in their lives that the two brothers could enjoy the freedom of being alone and doing what was their wont and desire without being under the constant vigil kept by the royal guards of the king's palace who would not allow them to do this and that for the fear of harm coming to them.

So they merrily sang and hummed and smiled and laughed and jumped and skipped as they ran after birds and butterflies, plucking leaves and flowers and tucking away at creepers and soft branches of plants on the way!

They would often wander away from the sage, running into the water of a pond or a lake and splashing in it, spraying each other with the cool water and giggling cheerfully, and at other times they would canter up a hillock to see who can climb first, and then ran down the slope cheering and yelling in excitement. Fascinated by the new sights and scenes they saw every other moment, they would gape with amazement at the countless birds and animals that they encountered on the way. The verdant greenery of the forest and its charm enthralled the children no end. Obviously, they were terribly amused, excited and amazed.

But this constant running away and creating mischief made the sage worried about their safety. It's an extremely beautiful and heart-touching imagery. The sage would enjoy this scene in his heart as he knew that no harm can ever come to them no matter what happens. But then he is overcome with love for them and begins to worry for their safety like an ordinary human being. He was like on an emotional see-saw. This verse shows us the great effect of Maya or the delusions that the Lord creates. Even an enlightened sage of the exalted stature of sage Vishwamitra, who had known who Ram and Laxman actually were—because this was the precise reason why he had gone to fetch them—got trapped by the snare of Maya, forgetting for the moment the true form of the two brothers as being human images of the Supreme Being. But the fact of the matter is that it is this very down-to-earth feeling of love, affection and a sense of belonging to the Lord which is what that captivates the Lord and keeps him compelled to reciprocate the devotee's emotions and sentiments. The tables are turned, and a time comes when the Lord begins to worry about his devotee more than the devotee's longing for the Lord! It's a very practical and hands-on approach to realizing the soul's objective of attaining nearness to the Divine Being. It's definitely an easy way to reach one's goal as compared to the path of observing rigorous schedules and sacraments such as Japa, Yoga and Samadhi as prescribed in the scriptures for one's spiritual well-being.]

On the way (to the sage's hermitage) they saw the demoness named Tadka whom the Lord (Sri Ram) shot and slayed effortlessly with a single arrow⁶.

After this (i.e. after witnessing the powers and prowess of Lord Ram and his bravery, fearlessness as well as valour), the learned Vipra (literally a 'Brahmin', but here meaning sage Vishwamitra) taught the Lord many skills pertaining to warfare and use of mystical powers that are needed in such times to succeed (*bidyā bipra parhā'i*)⁷.

Thereafter, at the sage's hermitage, the Lord vanquished the demons and protected the fire-sacrifice of the sage⁸. This marvelous and astounding deed of his led to the spread of his fame throughout the world (6).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209.

⁷Refer: Baal Kand, verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6 herein below which narrates that sage Vishwamitra imparted divine and mystical knowledge to Lord Ram inspite of knowing that the Lord is a treasure of knowledge.

This idea is also expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 209. Here it is clearly stated that the sage taught Lord Ram great and unique mystical abilities and skills, such as being able to overcome thirst and hunger, having unparalleled strength and invincibility of the body, possessing incomparable radiance, splendour, glory and majesty of form and personality, besides surrendering to the Lord and acquainting him in the usage of all other mystical weapons that were in exclusive possession of the sage.

⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210. The demons who were vanquished here were Marich and Subahu. While Marich was shot with an arrow without a tip which flung the demon to an island in the far away ocean, Subahu was burnt to death with a fire arrow and the rest of the demon army was slayed forthwith.]

In due course of time, the Lord sent Ahilya (wife of sage Gautam, who was converted into a stone due to a curse) back to her husband's household⁹.

Tulsidas says that this was the moment when the sage told Lord Ram the story of river Ganges (and how it descended on the earth from the heavens)¹⁰ (7).

[⁹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211. The story of Ahilya is narrated in a note appended to Baal Kand, verse no. 1/57.

¹⁰Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212. The story of river Ganges is narrated in a note appended at the end of Baal Kand, verse no. 1/55.]

दोउ राजसुवन राजत मुनिके संग ।
 नखसिख लोने, लोने बदन, लोने लोने लोयन,
 दामिनि—बारिद—बरबरन अंग ॥ 1 ॥
 सिरनि सिखा सुहाइ, उपबीत पीत पट, धनु—सर कर,
 कसे कटि निखंग ।
 मानो मख—रुज निसिचर हरिबेको सुत पावकके साथ पठये पतंग ॥ 2 ॥
 करत छाँह घन, बरषै सुमन सुर, छबि बरनत अतुलित अनंग ।
 तुलसी प्रभु बिलोकि मग, लोग, खग—मृग प्रेम मगन रँगै रूप—रंग ॥ 3 ॥

rāga naṭa

(1/53)

dō'u rājasuvana rājata munikē saṅga.
 nakhasikha lōnē, lōnē badana, lōnē lōnē lōyana, dāmini-bārida-barabarana
 aṅga.. 1..
 sirani sikhā suhā'i, upabīta pīta paṭa, dhanu-sara kara, kasē kaṭi nikhaṅga.
 mānō makha-ruja nisicara haribēkō suta pāvakakē sātha paṭhayē pataṅga.. 2..
 karata chāmīha ghana, barasaim sumana sura, chabi baranata atulita anaṅga.
 tulasī prabhu bilōki maga, lōga, khaga-mrga prēma magana ramṅē rūpa-raṅga..
 3..

The Charming & Splendid Portrait of Ram-Laxman with Vishwamitra-2

Verse no. 1/53—The two princes (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) look glorious and magnificent along with the sage (Vishwamitra). They are handsome, comely, pretty and charming with perfection of form and bearing and personage from toe to head. Their face and eyes too are most attractive, while the charming and radiant complexion of their bodies resemble the darkness of the rain-bearing clouds and the dazzle of electric respectively¹ (1).

[¹Lord Ram is of a dark complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud, and Laxman is of a shining fair complexion like the brilliance of electric.]

The tuft of coiled hair on the top of their heads (and probably made into a bun) look attractive to behold (sirani sikhā suhā'i), as do the sacred thread around their necks (upabīta) and the Pitambar (yellow body wrapping cloth of silk) that covers their bodies (pīta paṭa). They each hold a bow and an arrow in their hands (dhanu-sara kara), while a quiver is tied around their waists (kasē kaṭi nikhaṅga).

This marvelous sight appears to give the impression that the Sun God (pataṅga) has sent his two sons ('suta paṭhayē'; known by the name of Ashwini Kumars along with the Fire God (pāvakakē sātha) to destroy the demons (nisicara haribēkō) who form the various diseases or obstacles of a fire sacrifice (makha-ruja)² (2).

[²Here, sage Vishwamitra symbolizes the Fire God by the virtue of the sage's radiant countenance and the seething anger that burns inside him against the tyranny of the demons who are constantly harassing him and preventing him from completing the fire sacrifice. The Sun God is the deity that is worshipped in a fire sacrifice, and therefore it is he who commanded his two sons known as Ashwini Kumars who are the medicine administrators for the Gods in heaven, here represented by Lord Ram and Laxman, to accompany the Fire God and go and treat the disease of the fire sacrifice that is preventing its completion, wherein the 'disease' stands for the demons who had been defiling sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice and preventing its completion. When a doctor examines a patient he decides the course of medicines in accordance to the disease and the problems faced by the patient. The 'fire' symbolizes the need to inject a fresh lease of life and energy into the patient who is almost dead and lifeless. What will the doctor do and how will he revive a patient by merely giving medicines if the vital energy in the patient has ebbed and cooled below a certain basic limit and can't be rekindled and revved up.

Hence, the two 'medicine doctors' known as Ashwini Kumars, the sons of the Sun God, were sent by the latter in the company of the Fire God who represented the Sun God himself, so that they can successfully treat the 'patient', the doused fire of the fire sacrifice, and revive it back to life by injecting 'energy of the fire' in it and remove all things and circumstances and climes that have made the 'patient' (fire sacrifice) sick in the first place, and to ensure that may not make him sick once again. The Fire God was to serve a double purpose—one was to provide the vital energy and dynamism to revive the patient and inject in him sufficient energy that it can come back to its former self, and the other purpose was to afford protection to the two sons of the Sun God so that no harm comes to them, but unfortunately should any danger come then the guardian Fire God would unleash his wrath and burn the attacking danger to ashes.

In other words, Lord Ram and Laxman were well qualified and competent to slay the demons who were defiling the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, but should something go awry and needs an appropriate corrective action then there was the ubiquitous presence of the mighty sage Vishwamitra, who possesses secret mystical weapons that are most potent and invincible, to take care of all eventualities.]

As the trio (sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) move ahead on the path, the clouds provide them with shade (*karata chāmṣha ghana*), the Gods shower flowers ('*baraṣairṁ sumana sura*'); to soften the ground below as well as to honour and rejoice their venturing to start the elimination process of the demons, one step at a time).

The Gods are mesmerized by the charming image of the two brothers so much so that they unanimously agree that this comely and peerless and fascinating beauty is far superior to that of Kamdeo/cupid's (*chabi baranata atulita anaṅga*).

Tulsidas says that humans, birds and animals (*maga, lōga, khaga-mrga*) on the way to the hermitage became so overwhelmed and enthralled in love and affection for the Lord that they virtually lost awareness of anything else (*prēma magana*), and were so enthralled and engrossed with the beauty and loveliness of the two brothers that they virtually drenched themselves in the abiding colour of love and affection for them (*ramṅē rūpa-raṅga*) (3).

राग कल्याण

(1 / 54)

मुनिके संग बिराजत बीर!
 काकपच्छ धर, कर कोदंड—सर, सुभग
 पीतपट कटि तूनीर ॥ 1 ॥
 बदन इंदु, अंभोरुह लोचन, स्याम गौर
 सोभा—सदन सरीर ।
 पुलकत ऋषि अवलोकि अमित छबि, उर न
 समाति प्रेमकी भीर ॥ 2 ॥
 खेलत, चलत, करत मग कौतुक, बिलँवत
 सरित—सरोबर—तीर ।
 तोरत लता, सुमन, सरसीरुह, पियत
 सुधासम सीतल नीर ॥ 3 ॥
 बैठत बिमल सिलनि बिटपनि तर, पुनि पुनि बरनत छाँह समीर ।
 देखत नटत केकि, कल गावत मधुप, मराल, कोकिला, कीर ॥ 4 ॥
 नयननिको फल लेत निरखि खग, मृग, सुरभी, ब्रजबधू, अहीर ।
 तुलसी प्रभुहि देत सब आसन निज निज मन मृदु कमल कुटीर ॥ 5 ॥

rāga kalyāṇa

(1/54)

munikē saṅga birājata bīra!
 kākapaccha dhara, kara kōdaṇḍa-sara, subhaga pītapāṭa kaṭi tūnīra.. 1..
 badana indu, ambhōruha lōcana, syāma gaura sōbhā-sadana sarīra.
 pulakata ṛṣi avalōki amita chabi, ura na samāti prēmakī bhīra.. 2..
 khēlata, calata, karata maga kautuka, bilamvata sarita-sarōbara-tīra.
 tōrata latā, sumana, sarasīruha, piyata sudhāsama sītala nīra.. 3..
 baiṭhata bimala silani biṭapani tara, puni puni baranata chāmha samīra.
 dēkhata naṭata kēki, kala gāvata madhupa, marāla, kōkilā, kīra.. 4..
 nayanānikō phala lēta nirakhi khaga, mṛga, surabhī, brajabadhū, ahīra.
 tulasī prabhuhi dēta saba āsana nija nija mana mṛdu kamala kuṭīra.. 5..

The Charming & Splendid Portrait of Ram-Laxman
 with Vishwamitra-3

Verse no. 1/54—The two brothers look magnificent and charming alongside sage Vishwamitra (as the trio wended their way to the sage's hermitage).

The two boys have curling locks of hair on their heads, a bow and an arrow each in their hands, and a Pitambar and a quiver tied around their waists (1).

Their faces resemble the full moon, the eyes are like the lotus flower, and their bodies, which are dark and fair complexioned respectively, are treasures of splendour, magnificence, charm and glowing radiance.

Seeing their incomparable, peerless and stupendously charming image, Vishwamitra became thrilled with ecstasy, and the surge of love and affection waxed so much in his heart that it seemed it could not to be accommodated in it (2).

As the two brothers walked on the path, they behave like is the wont of children of their age: they are exceedingly jovial and merry, doing strange and mischievous things, playing countless tricks and pranks, performing marvels of that only merry-go-happy boys could think of. They break creepers, flowers and lotuses on the banks of rivers and lakes and ponds, drink their nectar-like cool water and tarry for a long time there (on the banks) (3).

They sit on clean boulders or rocks under the shade of trees, and repeatedly praise and appreciate the shade and the pleasant breeze and climes of that place. Seeing (or observing) them, the peacocks began to dance, and the black bee, the cuckoo, the parrot and other birds began to sing in a voice that was most exceedingly sweet (4).

Seeing the Lord (Sri Ram) again and again (in his form as a lovely prince of bewitching beauty and tender age, playing around in a most jovial and carefree mood like is the wont of mischievous children of his age), the animals, the birds, the cows, the cowherds and their maids by the wayside got the fruit of their eyes (i.e. they felt exceptionally lucky, happy and fulfilled as if they had been rewarded by the Creator for they were able to see this magnificently charming sight with their own eyes till the latter was full of it).

Tulsidas says that everyone who watched the Lord subtly brought this image inside their hearts and sub-conscious minds and enshrined it reverentially there with due care as if to invite the Lord to enter their thatched huts and be seated on a soft seat made by spreading the delicate petals of the lotus flower!¹ (5).

[¹All those who saw the most enchanting image of Lord Ram and Laxman walking cheerfully and playing jovially as they wended their path alongside sage Vishwamitra to the latter's hermitage were absolutely mesmerized by the sight and did not content with just glancing at them once and going about their lives, but remained riveted to them. They stood transfixed, and realizing that sooner rather than later this sight would vanish from their view as the two princes proceeded ahead on their journey, all of the beholders—men, women, birds, animals et al—decided to permanently etch this image in their hearts and minds so that they could sub-consciously remember it for long long times to come.]

सोहत मग मुनि सँग दोउ भाई ।
 तरुन तमाल चारु चंपक-छबि कबि-सुभाय कहि जाई ॥ 1 ॥
 भूषन बसन अनुहरत अंगनि, उमगति सुन्दरताई ।
 बदन मनोज सरोज लोचननि रही है लुभाइ लुनाई ॥ 2 ॥
 अंसनि धनु, सर कर-कमलनि, कटि कसे हैं निखंग बनाई ।
 सकल भुवन सोभा सरबस लघु लागति निरखि निकाई ॥ 3 ॥
 महि मृदु पथ, घन छाँह, सुमन सुर बरष, पवन सुखदाई ।
 जल-थल-रुह फल, फूल, सलिल सब करत प्रेम पहुनाई ॥ 4 ॥
 सकुच समीत बिनीत साथ गुरु बोलनि-चलनि सुहाई ।
 खग-मृग-चित्र बिलोकत बिच-बिच, लसति ललित लरिकाई ॥ 5 ॥
 बिद्या दर्ई जानि बिद्यानिधि, बिद्यहु लही बड़ाई ।
 ख्याल दली ताडुका, देखि ऋषि देत असीस अघाई ॥ 6 ॥
 बूझत प्रभु सुरसरि-प्रसंग कहि निज कुल कथा सुनाई ।
 गाधिसुवन-सनेह-सुख-संपति उर-आश्रम न समाई ॥ 7 ॥
 बनबासी बटु, जती, जोगि-जन साधु-सिद्ध-समुदाई ।
 पूजत पेखि प्रीति पुलकत तनु नयन लाभ लुटि पाई ॥ 8 ॥
 मख राख्यो खलदल दलि भुजबल, बाजत बिबुध बधाई ।
 नित पथ-चरित-सहित तुलसी-चित बसत लखन रघुराई ॥ 9 ॥

rāga kānharā

(1/55)

sōhata maga muni samṅga dō'u bhā'ī.
 taruna tamāla cāru campaka-chabi kabi-subhāya kahi jā'ī.. 1..
 bhūṣana basana anuharata aṅgani, umagati sundaratā'ī.
 badana manōja sarōja lōcanani rahī hai lubhā'i lunā'ī.. 2..
 ansani dhanu, sara kara-kamalani, kaṭi kasē hairiṁ nikhaṅga banā'ī.
 sakala bhuvana sōbhā sarabasa laghu lāgati nirakhi nikā'ī.. 3..
 mahi mr̥du patha, ghana chām̐ha, sumana sura baraṣa, pavana sukhadā'ī.
 jala-thala-ruha phala, phūla, salila saba karata prēma pahunā'ī.. 4..
 sakuca sabhīta binīta sātha guru bōlani-calani suhā'ī.
 khaga-mrga-citra bilōkata bica-bica, lasati lalita larikā'ī.. 5..
 bidyā da'ī jāni bidyānidhi, bidyahu lahī baṛā'ī.
 khyāla dalī tāḍukā, dēkhi ṛṣi dēta asīsa aghā'ī.. 6..
 būjhata prabhu surasari-prasaṅga kahi nija kula kathā sunā'ī.
 gādhisuvana-sanēha-sukha-sampati ura-āśrama na samā'ī.. 7..
 banabāsī baṭu, jāti, jōgi-jana sādhu-sid'dha-samudā'ī.

pūjata pēkhi prīti pulakata tanu nayana lābha luṭi pā'ī.. 8..
 makha rākhyō khaladala dali bhujabala, bājata bibudha badhā'ī.
 nita patha-carita-sahita tulasī-cita basata lakhana raghurā'ī.. 9..

The Charming & Splendid Portrait of Ram-Laxman with Vishwamitra-4

Verse no. 1/55—The sight of the two brothers walking alongside sage Vishwamitra looks magnificent and marvelous on the road. As a poet, one can compare the young bodies of the brothers to a young Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant; or an evergreen tree called *Xanthocynus Epictorious*) and the Champak (Magnolia) plant (1).

The Lord's garments and ornaments are befitting them (are in accordance or consonant with the beauty of their bodies). Glamour seems to effuse or spill over from them as if the combined beauty, charm and attractiveness of Kamdeo/cupid and the lotus flower have taken permanent residence in their faces and eyes respectively¹ (1). [That is, their bodies are as charming and attractive as that of Kamdeo/cupid, the patron deity of beauty and charm, and the bewitching beauty of their eyes is like that of the lotus flower which the poets cite as the most apt metaphor for this characteristic feature.] (2).

There is a bow slung on his (Sri Ram's) shoulder, an arrow is held in his hand, and a quiver has been tied properly around his waist. All the glamour, magnificence, pomp, pageantry and beauty of all the fourteen Bhuvans (realms of the universe)² appear negligible or most humble when compared with that of the Lord's (3).

[²The 14 Bhuvans: see verse no. 1/6.]

As the trio (Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and sage Vishwamitra) walk on the forest-and-country path to the hermitage of the sage, the earth provides a soft path, the clouds give shade, the Gods shower flowers, and the breeze blows comfortably and pleasantly (so that their journey on foot is made very pleasant and enjoyable)³.

The flowers and the fruits which grow either on the land or in the water are eagerly waiting for the Lord's passage and welcoming him with a warm welcome. All sorts of water bodies (lakes, ponds, rivers, streams etc.) too are as eager and welcoming for the Lord⁴ (4).

[³Refer: Baal Kand, verse no. 1/53, stanza no. 3 herein above.

⁴The meaning is clear—Wherever the Lord goes he finds flowers of all imaginable varieties and sizes and colours in full bloom and spreading their sweet and pleasant fragrance throughout the path to be followed by the Lord as a humble gesture on their part to celebrate the occasion of the Lord's journey amidst them and to offer welcome and honour to him in the way they knew best. The flower which would be honoured by the Lord by his fleeting glance and attention for all its beauty and charm and fragrance and colour would shame even the Lotus flower which prides itself as the one always cited by poets to say how large and pleasant the eyes of the Lord are. Therefore,

all the flowers bloom in all imaginable colours and emanating all the hues of sweetness of fragrance and pleasantness of aromas to show the Lord how happy and exhilarated they are to find him in their midst, and as a silent gesture declaring—“Well come thou our Lord with the warmest of welcome! Thine presence amongst are midst has given us the blessedness that would be the envy of all others.”

The fruits of the choicest varieties had all ripened, making themselves temptingly sweet and succulent and most delectable in taste as if they were eager to offer themselves in the service of Lord Ram and afford refreshment to the Lord as he wended his path in the forest. The fruits become as sweet and ripe as they could ever become with the hope that they would be the fortunate ones to be chosen by the divine Lord to taste and refresh himself, and per chance even say a nice word about them which would be treasured by them for generations and would elevate them to an exalted pedestal amongst their peers.

The trees covered themselves with thick foliage and branches laden with flowers and fruits and made all the more pleasant and tempting with chirping birds and delightful insects and buzzing bees making them their habitat, and these trees effused the sweetest of aroma like the kindest of sandalwood, ambergris, lign-aloe etc. to give joy to the Lord and invite him to rest under their shade for a while and bless them thus. The tree under which Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamtira would stand and rest for a while would be proud to shame even the all wish-fulfilling tree known as Kalpa Tree of the Gods in heaven, and acquire the respect and acclaim which even the latter lacketh.

The water of lakes and rivers etc. became clear as crystal, pristine pure, rejuvenating and cool, expecting that the Lord would dip himself in their waters. There was a virtual competition between them to be one better than the rest in the hope that the Lord would select it over the others to jump in and refresh himself. Should Lord Ram and Laxman touch these water bodies, the latter would feel exceedingly honoured and put to shame even the pride of river Ganges which prides itself as being a holy river by the virtue of having its origin in the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. These water bodies would stand up and proclaim that they are more fortunate and privileged than Ganges because, for one, the latter had never had the opportunity to touch the feet of the Lord once it emerged from the Lord's feet and moved down to earth, and second inasmuch as that the Lord seems to have decided to bestow holiness and divine powers to these humble water bodies also so as to remove the sense of pride of Ganges as being the 'only one to have the holiness granted to it by the virtue of touch of the Lord's holy feet'.

In other words, all the entities of the forest did their level best to show their respect and honour to Lord Ram and serve him cheerfully in the best way they individually and collectively could, in the most warmest and affectionate of manner.

And the magical part is that the Lord obliges them all—he plucks the flowers and kisses them; he climbs trees to take the fruits to eat them; he dashes off to the stream and plunges in its water. The normally turbid, algae infested water of ponds too became crystal clear and potable. If we read the earlier verse and conjoin it with this verse, the scene is most heart-touching and enthralling for the mind of even the sternest and the dispassionate kind.]

The Lord's hesitant, shy and abashed demeanours⁵, his polite and sweet speech and words (the way he talks), his majestic gait and nimble steps (as he walks), his sense of fear that he ought not do anything that would annoy the sage, and his overall behaviour of respectful humility and submissiveness before the Guru⁶ (sage Vishwamitra)—all of them combine to portray a picture of the Lord as being most careful and respectful and obedient and diligent in observing etiquette and good manners with respect to sage Vishwamitra.

When the Lord (Sri Ram) stops here and there to gaze at different varieties of birds and animals on the way, the endearing child-like innocent expression on his face, his demeanours and his amazement at the fascinating sights make him look very charming and pleasant to behold (5).

[⁵Lord Ram is shy and feels abashed because all eyes are fixed on him. A child would naturally feel self-conscious in this situation. Then again, the Lord felt very odd that he has to act out his role as a child even though he is the Father of Creation and the universal Supreme Lord of it. What a funny fate!

⁶Sage Vishwamitra is called a 'Guru', literally meaning a teacher, because he had taught Lord Ram many secret skills and the art of invoking mystical weapons—refer verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6 herein above, and stanza no. 6 of the present verse no. 1/55 herein below.]

Thereafter, inspite of knowing Lord Ram to be a treasury of all sorts of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, skills and expertise, the Guru still preferred to impart knowledge to him (Sri Ram) in a formal way⁷.

Meanwhile, the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, discretion and expertise of all kinds (known as 'Vidya') got honour and fame and acceptance by the virtue of their being accepted by (or being considered worthy of acceptance by) Lord Sri Ram.

Then, he (Lord Ram) playfully (i.e. without any effort) slayed the demoness Tadka, seeing which the sage liberally blessed him⁸ (6).

[⁷Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6 herein above; and Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

⁸Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6 herein above; and Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

When the Lord enquired about the story behind river Gange's descent on the earth, the sage narrated that story along with the entire story of his (Raghu's) clan⁹.

At this time, Vishwamitra's wealth of happiness, bliss, joy and delight as well as love and affection for the Lord could not accommodate itself in his hermitage represented by his heart¹⁰. (7).

[*⁹See note appended at the end of this verse.

¹⁰While narrating these stories about river Ganges and Raghu's clan, the sage was ecstatic and so overjoyed that happiness overflowed from his mind and heart. The sage was extremely thrilled and excited as if he has found the nectar for which the most enlightened of sages and seers had spent their entire lives doing Tapa (severe penances and austerities), Japa (constant repetition of a holy formula), Yoga (meditation) and Samadhi (state of trance obtained in higher stages of meditation).]

The Brahmacharis (celibates; here meaning students of the sage), Sanyasis (those who have renounced the world), Yogis (ascetics), Sadhus (saints, hermits, sages, seers—those who were pious and holy) and hordes of Siddhas (mystics; those who had attained or possessed mystical powers) who lived in the forest became bodily thrilled when they happened to see the Lord in their midst. They felt that their eyes have been amply rewarded when they saw the divine sight of the Lord amongst them. Verily, all were full of exceeding wonderment and marveled with extreme marvel at the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have the Lord of the World amongst their humble selves! (8).

That the Lord has used the strength of his arms to vanquish and crush the evil ones (i.e. the demons) and has protected the Yagya (fire sacrifice) was enough reason for the Gods to sing adulatory songs in honour of the Lord, songs that were meant to celebrate and honour the good tidings and auspicious events of the time.

Tulsidas avers that the image of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman on the road (to Vishwamitra's hermitage and thereafter to Janakpur), as well as their enchanting activities en-route, eternally resides in his (Tulsidas') mind and heart. [The saint-poet asserts that this imagery of the Lord is permanently etched in his memory and heart for all times to come.] (9).

[Note--*9The story of river Ganges and its relation with the race of king Raghu is as follows:

The glory of River Ganges, the 'River of Gods', has been sung by Goswami Tulsidas in (i) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 17-20; (ii) Kavitawli, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 145-147; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 212.

The story of the origin of the holy river Ganges is narrated in *Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana*, Skandha 5, Canto 17, verse nos. 1-10.

It was contained in the Kamandalu (water pot) of Brahma, the creator. This is said in *Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana*, Skandha 8, Canto 21, verse no. 4.

Then, its acceptance on the head of Lord Shiva where it was locked in the mat of thick hairs on the Lord's head is narrated in *Valmiki's Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 42, verse nos. 23-25, and Canto 43, verse no. 1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in *Valmiki's Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

There is another version narrated in *Padma Puran*, *Sristhi Khand*. Here, sage Veda Vyas, who was narrating the Puran to Brahmin audience, told the story of the origin and descent upon the earth of the holy river Ganges in detail when they asked him about it.

Briefly, the story of river Ganges is this: When Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, to crush the haughtiness of king Bali and prevent him from declaring himself the emperor of the entire universe, the Lord had expended his left foot so much that its toe nail had ruptured the outer shell of the galaxy, creating a hole. The inter-galactic river flowing outside the known galaxy gushed in through this hole to fill the whole space. When this celestial river touched the feet of Lord Vishnu, it turned reddish due to the colour of the Lord's feet which are like the red or pink lotus. Because it had its origin from the foot of Lord Vishnu, the primary name of river Ganges was 'Bhawatpadi'. ['Bhagwat' = Lord Vishnu; 'Padi' = from foot.]

After the passage of thousands of Yugas (eras), it established itself in the northern edge of the heaven where the Polar Star is situated. This area is known as 'Vishnu-pad'. It is here that the Lord's great devotee Dhruv accepts the water of this holy river as

sanctified water, and the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-rishis hold it in the lock of hairs on their head. Meanwhile, when the celestial water poured in from the hole in the galaxy, the creator Brahma was alarmed because he realised that its fierce currents would sweep everything away, both in the heaven as well as on the earth where it descended to wash the feet of Lord Vaaman immediately after its entrance in the habitable galaxy. So Brahma used his Kamandalu, the water pot, to contain river Ganges within it.

From the summit of the heaven, i.e. from its northern fringes, Ganges cascaded down to the abode of the Moon God, went past it and fell on the summit of Mt. Meru (the golden mountain where the Gods live, including their king Indra) which is situated within the realm of Brahma, the creator.

From there it divides into four branches—named Sita, Alaknanda, Chakchu and Bhadra.

Out of these, Sita descends from Brahma-puri to the summit of Mt. Kesaraachal, then goes further down and falls upon the summit of Mt. Gandha-maadan, and from there flows through the area known as Bhadraa-shwa-varsha to finally fall into the salty ocean in the east.

The second branch Alkananda falls to the south of Brahma-puri, goes past countless summits of mountains to finally arrive at the summit of Mt. Hemkut. From there, it cascades down with tremendous speed and force down upon the plains of India (known as Bharat-varsha). Then it traverses the length of the land to fall and merge with the ocean in the south.

Chakchu, the third branch, reaches the summit of Mt. Malyawaan, and from there it flows through the area known as Ketumal-varsha, heading in the western direction to finally fall in the sour ocean in the west.

The fourth branch, Bhadra, falls from the summit of Mt Meru and descends to its north. Falling from one mountain upon another, it reaches the summit of Mt. Sringawaan. From there it flows through the area of the land known as Kuru-desh to finally fall in the northern ocean.

This river is known as the River of Gods or river Gangaa. This is the origin of the river in its celestial form. Refer: Smd. Bhagwat, 5/17/1-9.

When Lord Vaaman's feet were being washed as part of the ritual to honour the guest Brahmin by king Vaaman, Brahma the creator had collected this water in his Kamandalu (water pot) because it was very holy. Refer. Smd. Bhagwat, 8/21/4.

Later on, when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa (penance) to bring this holy river on the earth so that his ancestors who lay dead due to the curse of sage Kapil could be revived, Brahma told him that he must first prepare Lord Shiva to accept river Ganges on his head because when the river descends from heaven upon earth, it will do so with such tremendous force that the earth would not be able to bear it and would split into two. So Bhagirath did Tapa to please Lord Shiva who agreed to accept the cascading river on the lock of hairs on his head. Then he will gradually allow to let it down upon the plains is a stream that lacks the force by which the river falls thousands of miles from heaven. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/42/23-25, and 1/43/1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

Briefly this part of the story is as follows: King Sagar had done a great horse sacrifice known as 'Ashwamedh Yagya'. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his mischief and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he

successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

Now, king Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug up the entire earth in search of the horse, pursuing Indra relentlessly. During the process all the creatures who lived on the earth suffered immensely because their homes were demolished and they were uprooted from their natural habitats. This was what Indra wanted—to instigate Sagar to commit some sort of blunder that would invite the wrath of the creatures and the Brahmins, thereby inviting his own ruin. The Gods rushed to their patriarch Brahma, complaining about the developments. Brahma comforted them that they should not worry because Lord Vishnu who is responsible for the welfare of the creation would certainly do something to rectify the damage and punish the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, even after searching the earth the sons could not find the sacrificial horse. When they reported this to their father, king Sagar, he strongly rebuked them and ordered them to go back and search once again. This time around, they dug up the subterranean world. Ultimately, they reached the hermitage of sage Kapil on the shore of the eastern ocean. The mischievous Indra had hidden the horse there, but sage Kapil had no idea that it was a stolen sacrificial horse. So, when Sagar's sons saw the horse there, they concluded that it was stolen by the sage, and they haughtily challenged him. The sage was very angry, and he cursed them, reducing them to ashes.

When these sixty thousand sons did not return even after a long time, king Sagar ordered his grandson Anshumaan to go and find out what had happened. Anshumaan followed the path taken by his uncles, and finally reached the place where he saw their ashes in a huge mound. Lamenting and grieving, he wanted to perform their last rites. He also found the horse grazing nearby. For doing the last rites he needed water. Just at that time, Lord Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu), who was the maternal uncle of his own uncles, came there and told Anshumaan that ordinary water won't liberate his uncles because they were reduced to ashes by the curse of a great sage named Kapil. For this, the water of the holy river Ganges is needed. So he must go and make an effort to bring Ganges to earth so that its water can flow over the ashes and provide your uncles deliverance. Meanwhile, he should take the sacrificial horse and go home to his grandfather.

King Sagar completed his sacrifice and returned to his capital. He did not know how to bring the celestial river of Gods to earth, and he died without accomplishing the task. After his death, Anshumaan ascended the throne. His son was king Dilip. Anshumaan abdicated the throne in favour of his son and went to the Himalayas to do severe Tapa, and died there.

King Dilip had a son named Bhagirath. Dilip did many sacrifices in order to bring river Ganges to earth so that his ancestor's souls could find deliverance, but failed. Worried and frustrated he fell sick and died.

Meanwhile, Bhagirath had no sons, but he still was determined to bring Ganges to earth and fulfill the long cherished desire of his father, grandfather and great grandfather. So he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his wise ministers and went to do the severest form of Tapa one can imagine of. His determination and noble resolve pleased Brahma, the creator, who revealed himself before him and asked him to request for a boon. Bhagirath replied that if Brahma really wants to grant him something then he should bless him that he be able to bring Ganges to earth and wash his ancestors with its holy water so that they can find deliverance. Brahma advised him that he must please Lord Shiva and request him to accept the river on his head prior to its reaching the surface of the earth—because if the river fell directly upon the earth it would split the latter into two with its tremendous force.

So, Bhagirath prayed to Shiva who was more than willing to accept Ganges on his head because the Lord knew that the river had its origin in the foot of Lord Vishnu. As soon as Shiva gave his consent to bear the river on his head, Brahma let his Kamandalu tilt and thus the mighty river Ganges came cascading down with a thunderous force to land upon the matted hairs of Lord Shiva. Ganges was very proud of its own origin and powers, so it thought that it will push Shiva to the under-world by its sheer force. Shiva wanted to teach Ganges a lesson not to be haughty, so the Lord contained the might of the swirling waters of the haughty Ganges in the lock of hairs on his head so much so that the river almost got lost amidst its huge crevices.

Bhagirath was confounded: after all the efforts made by him, the river still failed to reach the ground. So he did Tapa again to please Lord Shiva and ask him to allow Ganges to fall down to earth. Pleased with his sincerity and devotion, Lord Shiva allowed a thin stream of Ganges to escape from his head and fall in the 'Bindu-sarovar (lake)'. Immediately upon reaching this lake, Ganges branched off into seven streams. The seventh stream followed king Bhagirath who lead its path on a chariot to the spot where the ashes of his ancestors lay. As soon as the holy water of the Ganges touched the ashes, the souls of the sixty thousand sons of king Sagar found liberation and deliverance.

At that time, Brahma appeared and blessed Bhagirath that henceforth Ganges would be deemed to be his daughter and bear his name. It would be known by three names—viz. 'Tripatha-gaa', 'Dibya' and 'Bhagirathi'. Hence, the holy river Ganges also came to be known as 'Bhagirathi', the daughter of Bhagirath. Since it flows in the whole of the three worlds, the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world, it is known as 'Tripatha-gaa'—that which flows on three paths. And since it is a holy and divine river, it is known as 'Dibya'—the divine and holy one.

There is another version narrated in *Padma Puran, Srishthi Khand*. Here, sage Veda Vyas, who was narrating the Puran to Brahmin audience, told the story of the origin and descent upon the earth of the holy river Ganges in detail when they asked him about it. Briefly this story is as follows:

Veda Vyas said—'In some ancient time, when sage Narad asked Brahma how creation came into being, Brahma told him that at the time of creation, he had requested the Paraa-Prakriti, the primary-primordial Mother Nature, to become the primary cause of creation. Brahma told her that he would use her to create everything.

Hearing this, the Paraa-Prakriti divided herself into seven forms. These seven forms are the following—(i) Gayatri (from which were produced all the Vedas, Swasti, Swaha, Swadha, and Diksha—i.e. all things related to the fire sacrifice), (ii) Vaag-devi or Saraswati, the goddess of speech and knowledge, through whom knowledge and scriptures spread, (iii) Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity that was needed to sustain and take care of the needs of the creation), (iv) Uma (the consort of Lord Shiva and said to be Mother Goddess from whom all other Gods and Goddesses originated; she is also the one who became instrumental in spread of knowledge), (v) Shakti-beeja (cosmic dynamic energy that gives all the Mantras their inherent mystical powers and is responsible for injecting vitality, energy and force into this creation), (vi) Tapaswini (the patron goddess or the cosmic force overlooking Tapa—austerity and penances), (vii) and Dharma-dravaa (the inherent powers of Dharma—everything that is in accordance to the laws of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality).

Brahma thought that the last form, i.e. 'Dharma-dravaa', was the best of the seven forms, and since it was in a liquid form ('Dravaa' = liquid), he stored it into his Kamandalu (water pot).

Now, during the Lord's incarnation as Vaaman (the dwarf mendicant) when he had spread his left foot to measure the entire universe during the sacrifice of king Bali, this

foot ruptured the sky and the heaven and appeared before Brahma. It was then that he washed the Lord's holy foot with the water that he had stored in his Kamandalu at the time of creation.

After the Lord's holy foot had been washed, this water fell on Mt. Hemkut. From there this water reached Lord Shiva who immediately placed it on his head because he realised it to be sanctified and holy as it had been used to wash the foot of Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Vaaman. So, this water now was established on the thick lock of hairs on the head of Lord Shiva.

Later on when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa with the intention of bringing this holy river on earth so that his dead ancestors could be revived and their souls could find peace, he had prayed to Lord Shiva to let the Ganges come down upon the earth. The Lord allowed its stream to descend upon the earth and follow Bhagirath across the land to the place where his ancestors lay dead. This is how the holy river descended upon earth and traversed eastwards following Bhagirath to finally merge into the ocean.

According to *Valmiki Ramayan*, Ganga was the elder daughter of Himwan, the king of the mountains, and his wife Maina. Maina was the daughter of Mt. Sumeru. The Gods took her to heaven because a number of divine deeds were destined to be dependent upon her. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga, 35, verse nos. 13-18.

In Tulsidas' book *Kavitawali*, Uttar Kand, verse no. 146, line no. 3 it is said that the "Supreme Lord of the world had transformed himself in the form of the water of the holy River Ganges". Now, what does it signify? The answer is as follows—

The Supreme Lord thought that he must find out a way so that even the humblest and the lowliest of creatures, humans and non-humans, can have easy access to a means whereby they can wash off their sins and find peace and a way to reach heaven. To be able to worship the Lord God in any form described in the honourable scriptures—whether it is any of the countless manifested forms that are usually known as an incarnation or an image of the Lord, the 'Saguna form', or an un-manifested form that is not visible because it is extremely subtle and sublime though it is omnipresent and all-pervading, known as the 'Nirguna form'—may not be possible for every single living being of this world. Say for instance, an animal can't be expected to read the scriptures, perform religious duties, or worship any form of the Lord in the way the word 'worship' is commonly understood to mean by even the remotest stretch of one's imagination. But the Atma, the soul of all the creatures yearn for peace and liberation and salvation. So should the 'Lord of All' not leave an option for such unfortunate off-springs of his as these humble animals, or for that matter even humans who are not fortunate enough to obtain liberation and deliverance from their sins by the other conventional methods? Surely the answer is 'yes', the Lord must provide something for these unfortunate members of creation.

And the solution that the Lord decided upon was to transfer a portion of his grace upon the earth in the form of the 'Holy Waters of River Ganges'—so that even the dumb, the deaf and the handicapped could benefit from the Lord's benevolence and grace, and are not deprived of this privilege!]

(1 / 56)

मंजुल मंगलमय नृप-ढोटा ।

मुनि, मुनितिय, मुनिसिसु बिलोकि कहैं मधुर मनोहर जोटा ॥ १ ॥

नाम-रूप-अनुरूप बेष बय, राम लखन लाल लोने ।

इन्हतें लही है मानो घन—दामिनि दुति मनसिज, मरकत, सोने ॥ 2 ॥
 चरनसरोज, पीतपट, कटितट, तून—तीर—धनुधारी ।
 केहरिकंध काम—करि—करवर बिपुल बाहु, बल भारी ॥ 3 ॥
 दूषन—रहित समय सम भूषन पाइ सुअंगनि सोहैं ।
 नव—राजीव—नयन, पूरन बिधुबदन मदन मन मोहैं ॥ 4 ॥
 सिरनि सिखंड, सुमन—दल—मंडन बाल सुभाय बनाये ।
 केलि—अंक तनु—रेनुपंक जनु प्रगटत चरित चोराये ॥ 5 ॥
 मख राखिबे लागि दसरथ सों माँगि आश्रमहि आने ।
 प्रेम पूजि पाहुने प्रानप्रिय गाधिसुवन सनमाने ॥ 6 ॥
 साधन—फल साधक सिद्धनिके, लोचन—फल सबहीके ।
 सकल सुकृत—फल, मातु—पिताके, जीवन—धन तुलसीके ॥ 7 ॥

(1/56)

manjula maṅgalamaya nrpa-dhōṭā.
 muni, munitiya, munisisu bilōki kahaiṁ madhura manōhara jōṭā.. 1..
 nāma-rūpa-anurūpa bēṣa baya, rāma lakhana lāla lōnē.
 inhatēm lahī hai māmō ghana-dāmini duti manasija, marakata, sōnē.. 2..
 caranasarōja, pītapāṭa, kaṭitaṭa, tūna-tīra-dhanudhārī.
 kēharikandha kāmā-kari-karavara bipula bāhu, bala bhārī.. 3..
 dūṣana-rahita samaya sama bhūṣana pā'i su'aṅgani sōhaiṁ.
 nava-rājīva-nayana, pūrana bidhubadana madana mana mōhaiṁ.. 4..
 sirani sikhaṇḍa, sumana-dala-maṇḍana bāla subhāya banāyē.
 kēli-aṅka tanu-rēnupaṅka janu pragaṭata carita cōrāyē.. 5..
 makha rākhibē lāgi dasaratha sōm māmṅgi āśramahi ānē.
 prēma pūji pāhunē prānapriya gādhisuvana sanamānē.. 6..
 sādhana-phala sādhaḥka sid'dhanikē, lōcana-phala sabahīkē.
 sakala sukr̥ta-phala, mātu-pitākē, jīvana-dhana tulasīkē.. 7..

The Charming & Splendid Portrait of Ram-Laxman with Vishwamitra-5

Verse no. 1/56—Both the princes (Sri Ram and Laxman) are most handsome, charming and auspicious to behold. The sages, their wives and their children¹ say this on seeing them—'This pair is very pleasant, enchanting and charming.' (1).

[¹This shows that in ancient times, sages and seers who lived in hermitages in forests had families. Their hermitages served three main functions: (i) they helped these pious souls to pursue their spiritual objectives without the distraction and diversion inherent in noisy populated places such as towns and cities and bigger villages, (ii) they served as schools and seminaries where students assembled from distance places to study like we have modern boarding schools, and (iii) they doubled up as monasteries or abbeys

where monks and hermits and sages and seers gathered together and lived a religious way of life under the supervision of one senior monk who was like an Abbot or a Pontif.

Usually, a very senior sage or seer would have a large group of disciples at his hermitage who would graduate and spread out into the world to establish their own places at different corners of the world, inheriting the name of the primary teacher and using it as sort of their parental name or surname, thereby establishing a lineage of sages and seers bearing the name of the original teacher as if he were their forefather and patriarch. This gave them a unique identity and respect because the name of the sage or seer whose name they adopted as their surname or parental name was well known, respected and established in the society and even amongst his peers.]

The sight of the two brothers, Lord Sri Ram and his younger sibling Laxman, is exceptionally attractive and charming in accordance with their age, personality and name².

It appears that (dark, rain-bearing) clouds and lightening, Kamdeo/cupid as well as the Markat-Mani (emerald), and the most precious of materials such as Gold—all have derived their value, magnificence, glamour, radiance, dazzle and splendour from them³ (2).

[²By this time the fame of the two brothers had spread to the distant corners of the realm as they were ‘princes of a great kingdom, and not ordinary sons born in some regular household’, and everyone was aware of their exceptional charm and beauty. So, when the people of the wayside hamlets and the sages and their families and disciples beheld the two brothers for the first time they found them to be a perfect match to their expectations.

The people had heard of the slaying of Tadka, and they had also heard that the mighty and able sage Vishwamitra, who was confounded by the demons’ tyranny, had zeroed down on Lord Ram and Laxman to provide him relief. So all who heard of these tidings concluded that there surely must be something special and mystical with the two princes. The spectacular glory of the Lord had preceded him and everyone who heard of it had become curious to learn more about the brothers. So when the tidings came that they are arriving on their way to the sage’s place, everyone rushed out to witness this unique sight first hand as no one liked it to let it slip by.

And indeed what they beheld even defied their imagination: the beauty and comeliness of the two brothers surpassed all notions of beauty and charm that the beholders had ever imagined of. They were more enthralling than what the people had expected to behold. But nevertheless, the sight of the two brothers stood the test of beauty and charm.

³Here, since Lord Ram is of a dark complexion he is compared to the dark rain-bearing cloud, and Laxman being of a light complexion is likened to the brilliance of lightening. The three entities mentioned here, i.e. Kamdeo, Markat Mani and Gold, also seem to have derived their magnificence and grandeur by borrowing it from the two brothers.]

Their feet are like the lotus, there is Pitambar wrapped around their waists, and they are the bearers of a bow, an arrow and a quiver. Their shoulders resemble that of a lion (as it is wide, muscular and strong), while their arms are like the trunk of Kamdeo’s elephant—i.e. elegant, majestic, muscular, long, robust, sturdy and strong (3).

The ornaments that are worn by them, ornaments which are suitable for their age and circumstances and are in accordance with the times ahead⁴, look more glamorous and splendid by the virtue of them adorning the body of the two brothers⁵.

Their lotus-like eyes and face as if it were the full moon appear to be stealing the mind of Kamdeo/cupid⁶ (4).

[⁴The two brothers had by this time grown up. So the ornaments that they wore were chosen to suit princes of their age. Then, they were going on a journey on foot which would take them through forests and sparsely populated areas of the countryside where there was the danger of robbers and thugs. Finally, they would be surrounded by sages and young Brahmcharis or student-disciples of sage Vishwamitra who were accustomed to living a life of austerity and abstinence. It would therefore be very odd, ill-advised and unbecoming for noble princes to live in ostentatious decorative gear, wearing fine ornaments of priceless value, in this environment where simplicity, austerity and abstinence from pretentious behaviour is the norm. They were on a mission to serve a great sage, and not to show-off the wealth of their kingdom. It was not an occasion for royal pomp and pageantry, but of sobriety and restraint. When faced with the task they were going to accomplish, which was to slay the demons, the need of the hour and time was possession of such qualities as valour, strength, fearlessness, bravery and courage, and not to behave like a tender-skinned, delicate and pampered prince who would turn pale even at the thought of stepping on the ground without footwear.

⁵Now therefore the ornaments that Lord Ram and Laxman wore were of the minimal quantity and value, just enough to distinguish them amongst the folks as being princes of the realm, and also to blend well with the boys with whom they would have to pass their days at the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra. Refer stanza no. 5 herein below where it is expressly stated that “they had on their heads peacock feathers and flowers tucked in the hair by way of ornaments”. These were the ordinary decorative things used by ordinary boys in the villages and the hamlets in the countryside, and by young boys who lived in the hermitages of sages, more as playthings and a means of diversion from the monotony of life than for any real worth in terms of value and price.

Verily, whatever they wore made no difference to their charm and splendid personality. In fact, the ornaments acquired their value and importance by the virtue of them being worn by the two brothers. If the same ornaments were worn by others, or were locked up the king’s treasury, they would have been worthless, but now these ornaments acquired an identity of their own and they got recognition and fame because anyone who saw the two brothers also saw them wearing these ornaments, and not those ornaments that were left behind by the brothers in the royal palace or treasury.

For instance, if at that time Lord Ram was wearing a simple one-strand pearl necklace and nothing else then it would be the one and the only one ornament that would be permanently etched in the memory of all the bystanders who were watching the Lord, and not, say, the garland of diamonds or wristbands of the most precious of gems or the golden waistband and a tiara of the most precious crystal that the Lord left behind in Ayodhya at the time of departure with sage Vishwamitra.

⁶Even Kamdeo/cupid, who himself was exceedingly charming and lovely to behold, being the patron god of beauty, enchantment and passion, seems to be in thrall and captivated by the magnificent sight of the stupendous beauty and astounding charm

and exceedingly splendid view of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, as they wended their way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra. If this was the state of affairs with Kamdeo, one can well imagine the effect the most charming sight of the two brothers had had on others.]

Behaving like children, or in a way that is quite natural with children of their age, they have decorated their heads with peacock feathers and flower petals, while the dust and grime that cover their bodies reveal their frolicking around and playful activities that they engaged themselves in on the sly in an attempt to avoid the eyes of the sage (Vishwamitra)⁷ (5).

[⁷The two boys wanted to thoroughly enjoy the sights and sounds of the countryside and the forest. As has been narrated in many of the foregoing verses, the playful activities of Lord Ram and Laxman as they wended their way through the forest is simply enchanting for the mind. They would plunge in water bodies, go after birds and butterflies, pluck leaves and flowers and run after animals, once standing standstill when they heard the unfamiliar sound of the forest and call of wild animal and then running behind deer and butterflies to catch them! On the one hand they were scared of annoying their guardian sage Vishwamitra, but on the other hand these childish temptations were too much for them to resist. The learned sage did realize this, and though he kept a vigilant eye so that no harm comes to the two brothers, he also silently allowed them a lot bit of freedom to enjoy themselves.

The sage was subtly enjoying this most enchanting sight himself. He was bored of being surrounded by young disciples in his hermitage who were trained to live a life of strict regime and discipline. After all, the sage was also a human being, and it was a natural urge in him to experience what pleasure there is in playing with children, something for which the great king Dasrath had yearned so much that he went to the extent of asking Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, for such an incredulous boon as having the Lord as his son instead of seeking emancipation and salvation for his soul. So sage Vishwamitra wondered what was so goodly, fascinating and charming in it, and yearned to experience the pleasure and bliss and solace for which Dasrath had sought this odd boon of asking the Lord to become his son!

And here was his opportunity to experience and fulfill his cherished dream. He knew that never again in life would he ever get this chance again—that he would watch mesmerized the Supreme Lord of creation playing right before his eyes with all his charming beauty at display, exhibiting so many artful gestures and heart-capturing strategic moves that would hold even Kamdeo/cupid enthralled as asserted in the foregoing stanza.

Therefore, the sage willingly turned a blind eye and allowed the two brothers freedom to do what they was their wont. After all, the sage also knew that no power in creation could and would ever cause any bit of harm Lord Ram and Laxman, and therefore it would be foolish on his part to act too wise and let go of this golden once-in-a-life time opportunity to watch the Supreme Being play like a child!

And what a great stage it was to watch this great maverick play of the Lord being staged! It was the pleasant background of a verdant forest rich in greenery, in trees, flowers, fruits, rivers, streams, rivulets, hillocks and mounds, small and big animals and birds who knew no fetters and were as free as these two children. The lucky sage had a

virtual ring-side exclusive view of this play with nothing to distract and disturb and obstruct the view. He was like the ring-master of the circus who lorded over all that he beheld. Had he wanted, he could stop the two brothers from playing mischief like the ring-master who could stop his artistes midway from displaying their skills in the arena as soon as he wants. Verily, if king Dasrath was the lord of the royal palace and the city of Ayodhya where he had watched enthralled as Lord Ram and Laxman played merrily around a few days ago, here it was sage Vishwamitra who was the lord of the forest and enjoying the same bliss and happiness as was enjoyed by Dasrath, but with a better stage where pristine beauty of Mother Nature only added to the charm and grace as the Lord merrily played and joyously frolicked and jested with mirth unbound as he wended his way cheerfully to the sage's hermitage.

Indeed, what could sage Vishwamitra want more!]

By and by, sage Vishwamitra brought his dearer-than-life guests (*pāhunē prānapriya*)—whom he had asked as a boon or largesse from Dasrath in order to protect his fire sacrifice—to his hermitage.

Once there, the sage worshipped (i.e. formally welcomed and showed his greatest respect to) the two brothers with exceeding love and affection, and duly honoured them⁸ (6).

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 also.

Sage Vishwamitra knew who Lord Sri Ram actually was—he was not an ordinary prince but the Lord of lords and the all-pervading, infinite, almighty Supreme Brahm. So the sage was overjoyed at having had this privilege of bringing Sri Ram to his hermitage as his guest-of-honour.

Another reason for showing special treatment to Lord Ram and Laxman once he reached his hermitage is that the sage realized that it was he who had desired of them and had gone to fetch the two brothers from their kingdom. They had not come to his place like his other ordinary students or disciples had, and even their father king Dasrath was reluctant to send them. So these two brothers had obliged him greatly by coming to his hermitage, and therefore they did deserve special treatment.]

He (Lord Sri Ram) represents the reward (fruit) of the different 'Saadhans' (i.e. means to attain emancipation and salvation such as various penances, austerities, vows, hardships etc. as prescribed in the scriptures) that are done by 'Saadhaks' (spiritual seekers) and 'Siddhas' (mystics). He is the One who makes everyone lucky that they have eyesight so that they can see the Lord personally and derive bliss and solace from this sight. He is an embodiment of all the good, noble and virtuous deeds of his parents, and verily he is the treasured wealth of Tulsidas' life (i.e. Tulsidas cannot survive without this wealth as Lord Sri Ram is like the breath-of-life for him; the Lord is Tulsidas' life and soul) (7).

[Note—In Geetawali, Tulsidas has skipped the narration of Lord Ram and Laxman protecting sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice, and the consequential slaying of demon Subahu with his entire army and hitting another demon Marich with a tip-less arrow that did not kill the demon but flung him to a far off island in the middle of the ocean. Thereafter, the two brothers tarried in the sage's hermitage for some time at his request. Then news arrived from Janakpur that a great bow-breaking ceremony is being organized there by the kingdom's king, Janak, to select the most suitable suitor for his daughter to whom he would marry her. The sage asked the two brothers to come along with him so

that they would enjoy the sights and sounds of this new kingdom and gain from this visit. This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 210.]

अहल्योद्धार

राग सूहो

(1 / 57)

रामपद—पदुम—पराग परी ।
 ऋषितिय तुरत त्यागि पाहन—तनु छबिमय देह धरी ॥ 1 ॥
 प्रबल पाप पति—साप दुसह दव दारुन जरनि जरी ।
 कृपासुधा सिंचि बिबुध—बेलि ज्यौं फिरि सुख—फरनि फरी ॥ 2 ॥
 निगम—अगम मूरति महेस—मति—जुबति बराय बरी ।
 सोइ मूरति भइ जानि नयनपथ इकटकतें न टरी ॥ 3 ॥
 बरनति हृदय सरूप, सील गुन प्रेम—प्रमोद—भरी ।
 तुलसिदास अस केहि आरतकी आरति प्रभु न हरी? ॥ 4 ॥

ahalyōd'dhāra

rāga sūhō

(1/57)

rāmapada-paduma-parāga parī.
 ṛṣitiya turata tyāgi pāhana-tanu chabimaya dēha dharī.. 1..
 prabala pāpa pati-sāpa dusaha dava dārūna jarani jarī.
 kṛpāsudhā siñci bibudha-bēli jyaum phiri sukha-pharani pharī.. 2..
 nigama-agama mūrati mahēsa-mati-jubati barāya barī.
 sō'i mūrati bha'i jāni nayanapatha ikaṭakatēm na ṭarī.. 3..
 baranati hr̥daya sarūpa, sīla guna prēma-pramōda-bharī.
 tulasidāsa asa kēhi āratakī ārati prabhu na harī?.. 4..

Liberation of Ahilya-1

Verse no. 1/57—[The story of liberation of Ahilya, who was the wife of sage Gautam, has been narrated herein in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/57—to 1/59. This story is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line

nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211. She was liberated while the two brothers had accompanied sage Vishwamitra to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony there.

It so happened that after Lord Ram and Laxman had jointly protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, the sage politely requested them to tarry with him for some days. Meanwhile, news arrived from the kingdom of Janakpur that its king, named Janak, was organising a grand ceremony to marry his daughter named Sita to the most suitable suitor. Sage Vishwamitra wanted to visit it, and he took Lord Ram and Laxman for an excursion with him so that they would have some sort of diversion and more fun and entertainment. On the way to Janakpur they saw an abandoned hermitage with a large rock lying forlorn. Curious to know its history, Lord Ram enquired of the sage about it, whereby the sage told him the story of Ahilya and how she had been converted to stone with a caveat that one day she would be released of this curse when Lord Vishnu would touch her with his holy feet in his form as Lord Ram. Ahilya had suffered immensely and the time had come for her liberation. Hence, sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to touch the stone with his foot. As soon as it was done, the stone metamorphosed into a divine lady who was none other but Ahilya in her pristine divine form. She offered her prayers of thanks to the Lord for her deliverance and went back to her husband sage Gautam.]

As soon as the dust of Lord Sri Ram's lotus-like feet touched (or fell) on the head of (stone-like) Ahilya¹, she immediately abandoned her form as a stone and assumed (or, reverted back to) her original beauteous form with a divine and purified body (1).

[¹See note appended to this verse at its end which narrates a brief story of Ahilya.]

It appears that the Kalpa-creeper (celestial creeper) symbolizing Ahilya, which had been burning by the extreme heat (i.e. torment, anguish, sorrows faced by Ahilya) generated by the fierce curse of her husband due to her own sin (or errors, misdemeanour), has now been rejuvenated back to life and has regained its former glory after being watered by the elixir-like mercy and compassion of the Lord. Indeed, this creeper has once again bloomed and flourished with fruits of happiness, joy and bliss² (2).

[²Here, Ahilya is likened to the 'Kalpa-creeper' and the dust of Lord Ram's feet that fell on her to the 'sprinkling of the life giving water, the elixir of life, on her'—and the result was that the 'creeper' which had lay withered and dried up for ages suddenly found a new lease of life and thanked its benefactor Lord Ram with utmost thanks that could not be contained in words.]

Seeing the image of the Lord (Ram)—an image which is unimaginable and inaccessible even for the Vedas (the primary and the greatest of all the scriptures), and an image which was selected and accepted by the damsel representing Lord Shiva's discriminatory wisdom and intellect over all other divine forms of the Lord God³—coming her way, was within her sight and soon standing right in front of her, she (Ahilya) became spellbound and benumbed, as if in a trance, and did not move her eyes from that sight of the Lord's image, so mesmerized was she (3).

[³Lord Shiva is called a 'Maha-deva', i.e. the Great God. He is deemed to be the wisest and most enlightened in the entire pantheon of Gods. He meditated and contemplated to find one single remedy for all spiritual needs, and concluded that it was the holy name of 'Ram'. So Shiva enshrined the Lord's form in his heart just as one

enshrines a deity in a shrine. Then Shiva began to worship this deity (Lord Ram) by repeating his name—‘Ram’. And he was amazed to discover that it gave him astounding bliss, beatitude and felicity; he found that not even Amrit, the heavenly elixir of eternity and blissful life could match this single word ‘Ram’.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 19; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108 etc.

Shiva had searched all the Vedas and weighed all the options and examined all the forms of Divinity and Holiness, and found no one matched ‘Ram’. So, he adopted it as his magical charm for all his spiritual needs. Not only this, he henceforth used the divine name of Lord ‘Ram’ to liberate the soul of dying persons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Now therefore, when Ahilya saw the same Lord, i.e. Lord Ram, coming her way, she immediately realised that the time of her deliverance from the curse had come. What more could she want—the Lord whom the Vedas pursued but could not find, whom Lord Shiva selected as his revered deity after careful analysis—the same Lord was voluntarily coming to meet her!]

Thus, being overwhelmed with love, devotion and happiness, she mentally began to praise, adore and sing the Lord’s beauty, magnificence, characters, virtues and qualities.

Tulsidas says that in the same which downtrodden, lowly, humble, meek and sinful one is there whose sufferings, grief and miseries have not been eliminated by the benevolent, magnanimous and beneficent Lord Ram. [In other words, there is no one who does not benefit from the mercy and compassion of Lord Ram no matter how lowly and down he is.] (4).

[Note—¹The story of *Ahilya* in brief is as follows—She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram’s holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman’s vagina, a virtual ‘hole’ in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a ‘hole’. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world known about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra’s body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.

The story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.]

(1 / 58)

परत पद-पंकज ऋषि-रवनी ।
 भई है प्रगट अति दिव्य देह धरि मानो त्रिभुवन-छबि-छवनी ॥ 1 ॥
 देखि बड़ो आचरज, पुलकि तनु कहति मुदित मुनि-भवनी ।
 जो चलिहैं रघुनाथ पयादेहि, सिला न रहिहि अवनी ॥ 2 ॥
 परसि जो पाँय पुनीत सुरसरी सोहै तीनि-गवनी ।
 तुलसिदास तेहि चरन-रेनुकी महिमा कहै मति कवनी ॥ 3 ॥

(1/58)

parata pada-paṅkaja ṛṣi-ravanī.
 bha'ī hai pragaṭa ati dibya dēha dhari mānō tribhuvana-chabi-chavanī.. 1..
 dēkhi baṛō ācaraja, pulaki tanu kahati mudita muni-bhavanī.
 jō calihairā raghunātha payādēhi, silā na rahihi avanī.. 2..
 parasi jō pāmīya punīta surasarī sōhai tīni-gavanī.
 tulasidāsa tēhi carana-rēnukī mahimā kahai mati kavanī.. 3..

Liberation of Ahilya-2

Verse no. 1/58—As soon as the dust of Lord Ram's feet touched Ahilya, she turned (from a stone) into a divine lady, as if she was the daughter of the goddess of beauty in this universe (1).

Seeing this wonder of all wonders, all the consorts of various sages and hermitesses living in the forest began to speculate that it is possible that all the stones on the path walked on by Lord Ram would be converted into excellent ladies, and it would be therefore difficult to find stones anymore in this world¹ (2).

[¹There were thousands and thousands of stones and pebbles lying scattered on the ground. If Lord Ram's feet could turn one stone into a divine lady, thought these ladies, then there are great probabilities that at least a majority of these countless stones and pebbles would also be metamorphosed into some kind of a female form. It may be that these stones and pebbles and rocks lying scattered all around were some damsel or lady of worth in some ancient time of yore and days gone by, but due to any misfortune that may have befallen them they were transformed into their current state just like the case of Ahilya. Well then, should any numbers of them regain their original form and decide to abide in the forest unlike Ahilya who went back to her husband sage Gautam,

then it would create a very piquant situation for all forest dwelling hermits, sages and ascetics.

Only a few of the aged and more senior amongst the sages had maintained hermitages where they lived with their wives, and one fine example is that of sage Atri and his wife Anusuiya whom Lord Ram visited later on during his sojourn in the forest for 14 years to live out his exile period (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7). The probable reason for it was that they wanted their chaste wives to join them and share the bliss of the spiritual journey and attainment of final liberation together as they had hitherto also shared the joys and pains of life as householders together. The wife had equal right to join her husband to cover the rest of the path of their journey of life together as they had done together till now, if she was willing and able.

But this was rather an exception than the norm, as the majority of sages and seers and hermits had renounced their households and had come to the forest to do Tapa and lead a life of stern austerity and penance that barred them from even thinking of the pleasures and comforts of home left behind, of their families, wives and children and kith and kin. Now in the eventuality these stones and pebbles and rocks would become women, the forest would be filled with countless ladies of beauty and charm, of varying ages and qualities—and the consequences of this happening vis-à-vis these hermits and sages are too obvious to narrate explicitly. The forest will become a huge household teeming with hermit-men and hermit-ladies, and God forbid, with their progenies and their own branches! And should this ever happen, it would be most unwelcome development as it would undercut the very foundation of Dharma which envisages that the last segment of a person's life should be spent peacefully in the lap of Mother Nature where the person can derive peace and solace for the soul. A few instances of wives accompanying their husbands to the forest was alright, but what if the whole forest became one big city teeming with chattering women and men eyeing them lustfully when the latter were supposed to remain submerged in the thought of the Lord God.

Now therefore we can make an interesting and logical conjecture here. In all probability Lord Ram, who was all-knowing and omniscient Supreme Lord of the world, knew what was going in the mind of these forest-dwelling hermitesses, and he realized the wider import of their reservations as outlined above. Hence, the Lord exerted special care and ensured that the liberation of Ahilya by the virtue of the touch of his divine feet was once-in-a-life time happening, the rarest of the rare, and not something that would become a precedent for others to be invoked and compel the Lord to replicate it. So the Lord withdrew this mystical powers from the dust of his feet, and walked on and fared ahead like an ordinary prince.]

Tulsidas says that no one is wise and skilled enough to describe the mystical fame and the divine glory of the Lord whose mere touch of river Ganges by his holy feet had turned this river into the holiest river in the world² (3).

[²River Ganges acquired its holiness and spiritual values by the virtue of it emerging from the toes of Lord Vishnu. See the “story of Ganges” narrated in a note appended to verse no. 1/55 herein above. There are scores of rivers on this earth, but none has this honour.

The main objective of Tulsidas is to highlight the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram's feet and advising seekers to seek spiritual solace and succour by taking the recourse of having devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram which is so divine and powerful that it had 'liberated Ahilya from the curse of being a stone' and 'making river Ganges the holiest of all holy rivers'.]

(1 / 59)

भूरिभाग—भाजनु भई ।
 रूपरासि अवलोकि बंधु दोउ प्रेम—सुरंग रई ॥ 1 ॥
 कहा कहैं, केहि भाँति सराहैं, नहि करतूति नई ।
 बिनु कारन करुनाकर रघुबर केहि—केहि गति न दई? ॥ 2 ॥
 करि बहु बिनय, राखि उर मूरति मंगल—मोदमई ।
 तुलसी है बिसोक पति—लोकहि प्रभुगुन गनत गई ॥ 3 ॥

(1/59)

bhūribhāga-bhājanu bhaī.
 rūparāsi avalōki bandhu dō'u prēma-suraṅga raī.. 1..
 kahā kahaim, kēhi bhām̐ti sarāhaim, nahi karatūti naī.
 binu kārana karunākara raghubara kēhi-kēhi gati na daī?.. 2..
 kari bahu binaya, rākhi ura mūrati maṅgala-mōdamaī.
 tulasī hvai bisōka pati-lōkahi prabhuguna ganata gaī.. 3..

Liberation of Ahilya-3

Verse no. 1/59—Today, Ahilya has become extremely fortunate and an embodiment of auspiciousness and glories. She has been completely soaked (i.e. drenched and imbued) in the colour of love, affection and endearment for the Lord (Sri Ram) after seeing the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) who are a treasury (or a fount) of beauty, charm, attractiveness and majesty (1).

Say, how can a poet describe this scene or sing the praises of the Lord (with his limited treasury of words that have their own limitations and restrictions, for the Lord is limitless, infinite, and beyond the grasp of mind and intellect)?

This marvel of all great marvels, this wonder of all exceeding wonders (of converting a stone into a divine lady known as Ahilya) is not new or alien for the Lord too, for say, whom has the most merciful, compassionate, benevolent and graceful Lord Raghubar (Sri Ram) not given an auspicious end (i.e. liberation, deliverance,

emancipation and salvation), without any cause or vested interest in doing so (i.e. he does it selflessly), because it is in his nature? (2).

Tulsidas says that after saying a number of prayers with all humility, and keeping the Lord's auspicious and blissful image in her heart, she (Ahilya) became free of all sorrows and miseries.

Thereafter, singing affectionately and devotedly the Lord's glories, virtues and graceful nature, the Lord's great fame and renown (as a provider of spiritual bliss and deliverance to his devotees and those who are humble and seek his refuge), she went back to the abode of her husband (sage Gautam) (3).

राग कान्हरा

(1 / 60)

कौसिकके मखके रखवारे ।
 नाम राम अरु लखन ललित अति, दसरथ—राज—दुलारे ॥ 1 ॥
 मेचक पीत कमल कोमल कल काकपच्छ—धर बारे ।
 सोभा सकल सकेलि मदन—बिधि सुकर सरोज सँवारे ॥ 2 ॥
 सहस समूह सुबाहु सरिस खल समर सूर भट भारे ।
 केलि—तून—धनु—बान—पानि रन निदरि निसाचर मारे ॥ 3 ॥
 ऋषितिय तारि स्वयंबर पेखन जनकनगर पगु धारे ।
 मग नर—नारि निहारत सादर, कहैं बड़ भाग हमारे ॥ 4 ॥
 तुलसी सुनत एक—एकनि सो चलत बिलोकनिहारे ।
 मूकनि बचन—लाहु, मानो अंधनि लहे हैं बिलोचन—तारे ॥ 5 ॥

rāga kānharā

(1/60)

kausikakē makhakē rakhavārē.
 nāma rāma aru lakhana lalita ati, dasaratha-rāja-dulārē.. 1..
 mēcaka pīta kamala kōmala kala kākapaccha-dhara bārē.
 sōbhā sakala sakēli madana-bidhi sukara sarōja samvārē.. 2..
 sahasa samūha subāhu sarisa khala samara sūra bhaṭa bhārē.
 kēli-tūna-dhanu-bāna-pāni rana nidari nisācara mārē.. 3..
 ṛṣitiya tāri svayambara pēkhana janakanagara pagu dhārē.
 maga nara-nāri nihārata sādara, kahaim̐ baṛa bhāga hamārē.. 4..

tulasī sunata ēka-ēkani sō calata bilōkanihārē.
mūkani bacana-lāhu, mānō andhani lahē hairi bilōcana-tārē.. 5..

Lord Ram's Glories Being Sung on the Way to Janakpur

Verse no. 1/60—[The news of Lord Ram's miraculous deeds which were wonderful and wondrous too—such as the turning of a stone into a woman by the name of Ahilya, the protection of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice from being defiled by ferocious demons, and the subsequent vanquishing of these demons Subahu and Marich alongwith their terrible army—had spread far and wide like wildfire, and had reached the path much ahead of the Lord. Therefore, when Lord Ram and Laxman reached the villages and hamlets lying on the side of the path to Janakpur, the people rushed out to see them. Their personality and bearing was so majestic and royal, and the fact that they were accompanied by sage Vishwamitra who was well-known and easily recognised, made the two brothers easily identifiable on the road. See stanza no. 5 of this verse.

The ordinary folks had heard of their glories and marvellous deeds, but had yet to see their stupendous beauty and charm. So when they saw the two brothers for the first time they were virtually struck with amazement and great wonder, wondering if what they beheld was something real or a fanciful dream! So let's read on:--]

The residents of wayside villages and hamlets as well as travellers on the road talked with each other, saying—"These two (Sri Ram and Laxman) are the ones who have protected (or guarded) the fire sacrifice of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). They have lovely names, Sri Ram and Laxman, and they are the beloved sons of king Dasrath (1).

They have a tuft of curly hairs on the crest of their heads, and resemble very tender and beautiful lotus flowers of dark and yellow colours respectively¹—as if Kamdeo/cupid, in the role of a 'creator', had assembled all qualities of magnificence, glamour, beauty, elegance, charm and attractiveness, and had used them to mould (caste, create) them (Sri Ram and Laxman) with his own hands² (2).

[¹Here, Lord Ram with a dark complexion is like the dark-blue lotus flower, and Laxman with a fair complexion is like a yellow-coloured flower.

²The Creator of the world is Brahma, but the two brothers are so magnificently beautiful to behold, their loveliness and enchantment so great and intense that it is unlikely that Brahma has created them. Brahma's creation is seen everywhere in this world, but no where would one find anything or anyone with which or whom even a fleeting comparison can be made with respect to the virtues of beauty, majesty, charm, attractiveness and enchantment that are so integral to these two noble princes, Lord Ram and Laxman.]

They have very easily and playfully rebuffed and slayed thousands of veteran hard-core demons like Subahu and his companions who were wicked, war-hardened, ferocious and blood-thirsty in the battle (while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra). And this stupendous and marvellous feat was accomplished by the two brothers by little bows

and arrows they are nothing but like toys in their hands (or, “with such little bows and arrows that are nothing else but toys with which boys of their age play”³! (3).

[³On the one hand were the ferocious demons of colossal sizes and ferocity of manners who held all sorts of sharp and dangerous weapons, and on the other hand were these two young boys who faced the wrath of the demons with only little bows and arrows in their hands. And this fact makes their achievement of slaying the huge demon army all the more astounding and remarkable and unbelievable, and wondrous of all the exceeding wonders in this world.]

Now they are going to Janakpur after liberating the sage’s wife (Ahilya)'.

Saying, 'We are very fortunate indeed', all the men and women living in the villages and hamlets enroute who had a chance to view the two brothers, or those who met the two brothers as fellow travellers, saw them with utmost respect and reverence in their hearts, and were in awe of them (4).

Tulsidas says that this news spread rapidly by word of mouth (from one person to another, from one village to another) as the people passed by and fared on their way. This inspired others to follow them to have a glimpse of the two brothers as if dumb have got back their voice and the blind have received the iris of their eyes (i.e. have got back their vision)⁴ (5).

[⁴Tulsidas means the people who heard the news were full of wonder and were awestruck. They marvelled at what they had heard; it was almost like a miracle for them. So, they rushed forward to see the maverick Sri Ram and Laxman who could perform such stupendous deeds which were beyond imagination. Some who were present at the time were struck by the beauty and charm of the two brothers and they craned their necks and eyes to see them as closely and as much as they can. Some of these smitten folks followed the brothers to some distance, and others rushed back home and told others who weren't present at the place from where the two brothers had just passed. When these people heard of the wondrous tidings, they rushed and ran the distance to catch up with the two brothers so that they can see them before it was too late and the brothers had moved far away on the road. Such was the magical charm of the two brothers that they attracted people like a magnet attracts iron.]

जनकपुर—प्रवेश

राग टोड़ी

(1 / 61)

आये सुनि कौसिक जनक हरषाने हैं ।

बोलि गुर भूसुर, समाज सों मिलन चले,
 जानि बड़े भाग अनुराग अकुलाने हैं ॥ 1 ॥
 नाइ सीस पगनि, असीस पाइ प्रमुदित,
 पाँवड़े अरघ देत आदर सों आने हैं ।
 असन, बसन, बासकै सुपास सब बिधि,
 पूजि प्रिय पाहुने, सुभाय सनमाने हैं ॥ 2 ॥
 बिनय बड़ाई ऋषि—राजऊ परसपर
 करत पुलकि प्रेम आनंद अघाने हैं ।
 देखे राम—लखन निमेषै बिथकित भई
 प्रानहु ते प्यारे लागे बिनु पहिचाने हैं ॥ 3 ॥
 ब्रह्मानंद हृदय, दरस—सुख लोयननि
 अनभये उभय, सरस राम जाने हैं ।
 तुलसी बिदेहकी सनेहकी दसा सुमिरि,
 मेरे मन माने राउ निपट सयाने हैं ॥ 4 ॥

janakapura-pravēśa

rāga ṭōrī

(1/61)

āyē suni kausika janaka haraṣānē haiṁ.
 bōli gura bhūsura, samāja sōm milana calē,
 jāni barē bhāga anurāga akulānē haiṁ.. 1..
 nā'i sīsa pagani, asīsa pā'i pramudita,
 pām̐varē aragha dēta ādara sōm ānē haiṁ.
 asana, basana, bāsakai supāsa saba bidhi,
 pūji priya pāhunē, subhāya sanamānē haiṁ.. 2..
 binaya barā'i ṛṣi-rāja'ū parasapara
 karata pulaki prēma ānam̐da aghānē haiṁ.
 dēkhē rāma-lakhana nimēṣai bithakita bha'i
 prānahu tē pyārē lāgē binu pahicānē haiṁ.. 3..
 brahmānanda hr̥daya, darasa-sukha lōyanani
 anabhayē ubhaya, sarasa rāma jānē haiṁ.
 tulasī bidēhakī sanēhakī dasā sumiri,
 mērē mana mānē rā'u nipaṭa sayānē haiṁ.. 4..

Arrival of sage Vishwamitra with Lord Ram & Laxman
 at Janakpur

Verse no. 1/61—[The story goes that king Janak of Janakpur had a daughter named Sita. He had organized a ‘Swayambar’ to get her married. It is a marriage ceremony wherein the groom is selected on the basis of some preset conditions. In this case, Janak had set the condition that anyone whosoever would break an old and worn out bow of Lord Shiva that was lying in his family from many past generations would marry Sita. The would-be bride was extremely pretty and had all the wonderful virtues and goodness that one would expect from a girl one would bring in as his wife and who outshone every eligible princess of her time in every parameter. So, as soon as the declaration was made by king Janak, all the great princes and kings of all the seven continents and corners of the world had arrived to try their luck, and they numbered in hundreds and thousands. Even the demon kings such as Ravana and Banasur had assumed human forms and come. So there was a huge assembly of competitors. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251; Doha no. 251 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

It was to attend this ceremony that sage Vishwamitra had come, and had brought Lord Ram and his brother Laxman with him.]

When king Janak heard of the arrival of Vishwamitra, he was full of joy. He called the Brahmins and all his kin, and proceeded to meet him, bubbling over with enthusiasm and happiness¹(1).

[¹It was well known that sage Vishwamitra rarely goes visiting kings and attending their ceremonies. He was a senior sage of his time. Usually such great and senior sages would send some emissary to represent them, but if they come personally then it is great honour on the host. Besides this, he was the only senior sage who had come to visit Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony organized by king Janak. This is evident when one reads the entire episode because the king had seated sage Vishwamitra and the two princes accompanying him, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, on a special seat at the head of the assembly, a privilege reserved for the senior-most person. Hence, when the king heard that the sage has come, he regarded it a great boon and blessing, and this filled him with joy.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.]

When he met the sage, he bowed his head at his feet and got due blessings in return. Then he washed the sage’s feet as a mark of great respect, and welcomed him with gifts of food, clothes etc. Then the king gave him a comfortable place to stay in the city² (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 215; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 217.]

The sage (Vishwamitra) and the king (Janak) mutually praise and show courtesy to each other. In this way, being thrilled with love and affection, both of them are overwhelmed and overcome with joy, delight and bliss³.

Seeing Sri Ram and Laxman, he (Janak) even forgot to bat an eyelid. Even without formal introduction, the two brothers appeared dearer to him more than his own life, delighting his heart and belighting his sight⁴. (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 215.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.

There was a natural, instinctive affinity and attraction between Janak and Lord Sri Ram as if a magnet pulls a piece of iron due to its inherent quality. This was because Janak, though outwardly an ordinary-looking monarch, was in fact a great renouncer and greatly steeped in spiritual and metaphysical wisdom. Lord Sri Ram, being the infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and Lord God of creation himself personified, was the natural magnet that would pull the soul of an enlightened man towards himself in a natural fashion, even unwittingly, just like the case of a piece of iron being pulled towards a strong magnet even if they are separated by a curtain and invisible to each other. It was, so to say, a ‘chemistry’ that was instantaneously established between king Janak and Lord Ram, and it clicked!]

Experiencing in his heart supreme bliss and contentedness equivalent to Brahm-realisation (*brahmānanda hr̥daya*) by having his (Lord Sri Ram’s) Darshan (divine, holy and auspicious viewing) with his eyes (*darasa-sukha lōyanani*) convinced king Janak that the beauty of Lord Sri Ram’s image was more sweet, succulent, satisfying, gratifying, fulfilling, meaningful, rewarding and superior to the mere experiencing of bliss that comes with Brahm-realisation (*anabhayē ubhaya, sarasa rāma jānē haiṁ*)⁵.

Tulsidas says that when he remembers the condition of Janak he comes to the conclusion that the king was very wise and clever (and that his conclusion was flawless and correct as he was quick to realise the presence of Brahm right in his front as if he was being rewarded for a life-time spent in practicing spiritual and metaphysical philosophy). [It was literally like the Supreme Being called ‘Brahm’ coming down personally to oblige Janak for all his meritorious deeds and spiritual practices.] (4).

[⁵King Janak was a highly enlightened soul and an expert in metaphysics. He used to organise great conclaves regularly where great sages and seers came to preach, discuss and debate on spiritual and metaphysical philosophy. This fact is borne out by a Upanishad called “Brihad Aranayak Upanishad” of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition where one such conclave is described and where it was unanimously declared that sage Yagyawalkya is the greatest of his time. Even the parrot saint Suk, the son of the legendary sage Veda Vyas, had been sent by his father to king Janak to gain knowledge.

The point is that king Janak was steeped in spiritual and metaphysical philosophy and practiced them in his life. He remained submerged in the thoughts of Brahm, the supreme Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, and also in meditation and contemplation which made him turn inwards and exclude the external world of sense organs even while going about his duties of looking after the kingdom. This enabled him to remain calm and detached and neutral. This state of his mind and heart bestowed upon him bliss and contentedness that is called the ‘bliss that comes with Brahm-realisation and self-realisation’. But this also means dryness of the heart and mind because a person develops great detachment from all physical attractions of the gross world as he finds them illusory and unsustainable.

In the present case, however, a miraculous development has occurred. By seeing Lord Ram the king experienced the same bliss that the scriptures call the 'bliss of Brahm-realisation'. Even king Janak had to concede this miracle when he told sage Vishwamitra that he wonders why by seeing Lord Ram a surge of affection and bliss has heaved in his heart, and he is experiencing the same ecstasy and thrill that comes to an ascetic on Brahm-realisation though he is renowned as a renunciate soul who is not supposed to be affected by the sight of beauty. So there must be some secret to it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

Now therefore king Janak realised that this magnificent and enchanting view of Lord Ram was superior to viewing Brahm while in meditation because of the simple reason that the former added the benefit of giving joy and happiness and bliss and contentedness and pleasure and comfort to the gross sense organs such as the eye and all pores of the body by making the body thrilled, to the subtle organs such as the mind and heart in an easy way which would not have been possible by pursuing the very tedious and difficult path of meditation and contemplation.]

राग मलार

(1 / 62)

कोसलरायके कुँअँरोटा ।

राजत रुचिर जनक—पुर पैठत स्याम गौर नीके जोटा ॥ 1 ॥

चौतनि सिरनि, कनककली काननि, कटि पट पीत सोहाये ।

उर मनि—माल, बिसाल बिलोचन, सीय—स्वयंबर आये ॥ 2 ॥

बरनि न जात, मनहिं मन भावत, सुभग अबहिं बय थोरी ।

भई हैं मगन बिधुबदन बिलोकत बनिता चतुर चकोरी ॥ 3 ॥

कहँ सिवचाप, लरिकवनि बूझत, बिहँसि चितै तिरछौहैं ।

तुलसी गलिन भीर, दरसन लगि लोग अटनि आरोहैं ॥ 4 ॥

rāga malāra

(1/62)

kōsalarāyakē ku'amrōṭā.

rājata rucira janaka-pura paiṭhata syāma gaura nīkē jōṭā.. 1..

cautani sirani, kanakakalī kānani, kaṭi paṭa pīta sōhāyē.

ura mani-māla, bisāla bilōcana, sīya-svayambara āyē.. 2..

barani na jāta, manahiṁ mana bhāvata, subhaga abahiṁ baya thōrī.

bhaī haiṁ magana bidhubadana bilōkata banitā catura cakōrī.. 3..

kaham̐ sivačāpa, larikavani būjhata, biham̐si citai tirachaunhaiṁ.

tulasī galina bhīra, darasana lagi lōga aṭani ārōhaiṁ.. 4..

Lord Ram & Laxman in Janakpur-1

Verse no. 1/62—At the time of entry in Janakpur, the most beautiful pair of the princes of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) look very magnificent and enchanting (1).

Both the boys have a cap on their heads, golden ear-rings in their ears, Pitambar around their waists, and a gem-studded necklace adorns their chest. Their eyes are very large (like a lotus flower).

In this manner, they have arrived to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita (sīya-svayambara āyē) (2).

It is not possible to describe that magnificent and charming pair. It appears enchanting and pleasing to the mind and heart. They are of a tender (young) age too. *The clever women-folk represented by the bird Chakor (Indian red-legged partridge) gaze transfixedly at his (Sri Ram's) moon-like face and feel exhilarated¹ (3).

[*Now it so happened that Lord Ram took permission from sage Vishwamitra, and the two brothers then went out for sight-seeing in the city of Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 219.

¹The tidings of their stupendous charm and marvelous deeds had already reached the citizens of Janakpur. So as soon as the word spread that the two brothers have come to see the sights of the city, every able men and child rushed from their homes, and women jam-packed the balconies and attics and terraces of their homes to have a glimpse of the two wonderful princes. The women were simply swept off their feet and were enamoured by the bewitching charm of Lord Ram even as the bird Chakor is with the moon. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.]

He (Lord Ram) glances sideways at the boys of the city (who have swarmed around the two brothers as they go around to see the sights of the city, and especially the place where the bow-breaking event was to be organized) in a friendly manner, and enquires of them with a smile on his face—'Where is Lord Shiva's bow?'²

Tulsidas says that there is a huge surging crowd on the streets and lanes of the city with people jostling each other and craning their necks with eagerness to have a clear sight of the two brothers. Some of the city-folk climb on the terraces and balconies of homes and public buildings in order to avoid the jostling and milling crowd on the ground and have a better unobstructed view of the two princes as they wound their way down the streets and avenues of the city³ (4).

[²The children of all ages in the city had a time of their lives. While the adult population had to maintain some degree of self-restraint and behave in a dignified manner because they knew that these two princes were state guests of their king Janak, no such reservations was applicable to children who flocked and swarmed around Lord Ram and Laxman, tugging, pulling, pushing and shoving each other so as to be as close to the two brothers and be able to touch them and even hold their hands. And the marvellous

thing is that the Lord obliged all of them, behaving as if he was their playmate. Then slowly the two brothers neared the venue of the bow ceremony and Lord Ram asked the children to show him around, which of course they most enthusiastically did. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 224—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 225.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220.]

(1 / 63)

ये अवधेसके सुत दोऊ ।
 चढ़ि मंदिरनि बिलोकत सादर जनकनगर सब कोऊ ॥ 1 ॥
 स्याम गौर सुंदर किसोर तनु, तून-बान-धनुधारी ।
 कटि पट पीत, कंठ मुकुतामनि, भुज बिसाल, बल भारी ॥ 2 ॥
 मुख मयंक, सरसीरुह लोचन, तिलक भाल, टेढ़ी भौंहैं ।
 कल कुंडल, चौतनी चारु अति, चलत मत्त-गज-गौंहैं ॥ 3 ॥
 बिस्वामित्र हेतु पठये नृप, इनहि ताडुका मारी ।
 मख राख्यो रिपु जीति, जान जग, मग मुनिबधू उधारी ॥ 4 ॥
 प्रिय पाहुने जानि नर-नारिन नयननि अयन दये ।
 तुलसिदास प्रभु देखि लोग सब जनक समान भये ॥ 5 ॥

(1/63)

yē avadhēsakē suta dō'ū.
 caḍhi mandirani bilōkata sādara janakanagara saba kō'ū.. 1..
 syāma gaura sundara kisōra tanu, tūna-bāna-dhanudhārī.
 kaṭi paṭa pīta, kaṇṭha mukutāmani, bhuja bisāla, bala bhārī.. 2..
 mukha mayaṅka, sarasīruha lōcana, tilaka bhāla, ṭēṛhī bhaunhairī.
 kala kuṇḍala, cautanī cāru ati, calata matta-gaja-gaunhairī.. 3..
 bisvāmitra hētu paṭhayē nrpa, inahi tāḍukā mārī.
 makha rākhyō ripu jīti, jāna jaga, maga munibadhū udhārī.. 4..
 priya pāhunē jāni nara-nārīna nayanani ayana dayē.
 tulasidāsa prabhu dēkhi lōga saba janaka samāna bhayē.. 5..

Lord Ram in Janakpur

Verse no. 1/63—All the citizens of Janakpur have climbed atop their houses (balconies, roofs, attics, lofts etc.), watch them (Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) most respectfully, and say among themselves that these are the sons of king Dasrath of Avadh¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 221.]

Their bodies are most handsome, and dark and fair in complexion respectively². They are in their teens, and sport a bow and an arrow each (that they hold in their hands) as well as a quiver (that is tied to their waists). Pitambar (yellow coloured silk cloth) is wrapped around their waists. There is a necklace of gems and pearls around their necks, and their large arms are very strong, muscular and valorous (2).

[²Lord Ram is of a dark complexion, and Laxman is fair.]

Their faces resemble the full moon, the eyes are like a lotus, a Tilak Mark (religious mark) adorns the forehead, while the eyebrows are curved (like the bow). The ears have attractive ear-rings, and the head has a most lovely cap on it. They walk like a carefree elephant (i.e. they walk majestically, in a dignified manner)³ (3).

[³The enchanting image of the two brothers as they roamed on the streets of Janakpur, captivating the imagination and enthralling the heart and mind of all and every single citizen has been also described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.]

The king (Dasrath) had sent them to protect the fire sacrifice of Vishwamitra. They are the ones who have slain Tadka and have saved the fire sacrifice from being defiled by conquering the enemies (i.e. demons). The world also knows that they have liberated the sage's wife (Ahilya) on the way (to Janakpur)⁴ (4).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 221.]

Regarding the two brothers as their most honourable and dearest guest, all the citizens welcomed them and gave them a place in their eyes⁵.

Tulsidas asserts that on seeing the Lord, everyone became 'Videh' like king Janak (literally meaning they lost awareness or consciousness of their bodies and the surrounding world) (5).

[⁵That is, the citizens were so enthralled and spellbound by their enchanting beauty that their image seemed to be permanently etched in their mind's eyes. Since the eye is the only organ by which one sees the external world and which enabled these citizens to enjoy the wonderful sight of the two brothers. This sight was so captivating and rare in its beauty and charm that the citizens never forgot it in their lives. The image of the two brothers was permanently etched in their subconscious mind, and enshrined in the temple of their hearts—but the 'eye' was the door through which this image was brought in and established there.]

राग टोड़ी

(1 / 64)

बूझत जनक 'नाथ, ढोटा दोउ काके हैं' ?

तरुन तमाल चारु चंपक—बरन तनु
 कौन बड़े भागीके सुकृत परिपाके हैं॥ 1॥
 सुखके निधान पाये, हियके पिधान लाये,
 ठगके—से लाडू खाये, प्रेम—मधु छाके हैं।
 स्वारथ—रहित परमारथी कहावत हैं,
 भे सनेह—बिबस बिदेहता बिबाके हैं॥ 2॥
 सील—सुधाके अगार, सुखमाके पारावार,
 पावत न पैरि पार पैरि पैरि थाके हैं।
 लोचन ललकि लागे, मन अति अनुरागे,
 एक रसरूप चित सकल सभाके हैं॥ 3॥
 जिय जिय जोरत सगाई राम लखनसों
 आपने आपने भाय जैसे भाय जाके हैं।
 प्रीतिको, प्रतीतिको, सुमिरिबेको, सेइबेको,
 सरनको समरथ तुलसिहु ताके हैं॥ 4॥

rāga ṭōṛī

(1/64)

būjhata janaka 'nātha, ḍhōṭā dō'u kākē haim'?
 taruna tamāla cāru campaka-barana tanu
 kauna baṛē bhāgikē sukrṭa paripākē haim.. 1..
 sukhakē nidhāna pāyē, hiyakē pidhāna lāyē,
 ṭhagakē-sē lāḍū khāyē, prēma-madhu chākē haim.
 svāratha-rahita paramārathī kahāvata haim,
 bhē sanēha-bibasa bidēhatā bibākē haim.. 2..
 sīla-sudhākē agāra, sukhamākē pārāvāra,
 pāvata na pairi pāra pairi pairi thākē haim.
 lōcana lalaki lāgē, mana ati anurāgē,
 ēka rasarūpa cita sakala sabhākē haim.. 3..
 jiya jiya jōrata sagā'ī rāma lakhanasōm
 āpanē āpanē bhāya jaisē bhāya jākē haim.
 prītikō, pratītikō, sumiribēkō, sē'ibēkō,
 saranakō samaratha tulasihu tākē haim.. 4..

King Janak's Enquiry-1

Verse no. 1/64—[When king Janak first saw the two brothers at the time of meeting and welcoming sage Vishwamitra upon his arrival in the city, he was struck by the bewitching charm of the two brothers, Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman. So he enquired from the sage who they were. This dialogue is narrated herein below in verse nos. 1/62—to 1/68.

It is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

King Janak asked sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh Lord! Whose sons are these two princes? Their bodies are young, and they are like the catechu plant and the attractive magnolia flower inasmuch as being of a dark and fair complexion respectively.

Ah! Who is that fortunate one whose good, noble, meritorious and virtuous deeds have revealed in the form of these fruits? (1).’

Having found the treasury of bliss that Lord Ram indeed was, Janak symbolically took the Lord and respectfully enshrined him inside his heart and closed the door (so that the image remains in the treasury of his heart and in his safe custody).

He was so overwhelmed with the wine of love and affection for the Lord even as he thoroughly enjoyed watching in complete enthrallment the mesmerizing sight of Lord Ram that he was like a man who had eaten a wondrous sweet known as a ‘Laddu’ of the most delectable taste, and the like of which he has never aforetime seen, tasted or heard of, and then once tasted he becomes virtually so intoxicated by its sweet and pleasant taste that he thinks of nothing else but of the heavenly taste of this sweetmeat that lingers on in his mouth and feels that he did not have sufficient of it, and would rather be glad to have more and more of this sweetful experience.

Verily, king Janak was known to be selfless, one who was not tempted to please himself and gratify his senses, nor praise anyone with an eye on some favour and benefit (*svāratha-rahita*), but he was rather a dispassionate seeker of Truth and one who followed the path of spiritual pursuits (known as ‘*paramārathī*’).

But at this moment (as he watched Lord Ram) he forgot about his vows of renunciation and dispassion, remaining immune to the attractions of the world and temptations to gratify one’s senses, a fact that has entitled him to be honoured in the world by the epithet of ‘*Vidēha*’¹ (2).

[¹Janak was so highly spiritually enlightened that no attractions of the world, no matter how astoundingly charming, ever distracted his attention and captivated his mind or enchanted his heart. He was always detached from all attractions of the physical world and had overcome the natural habit of the sense organs to seek pleasures from their respective objects in the world, like for instance the eye seeking to enjoy a pleasant sight, or the mind remembering something that pleases it and is appealing to its senses. Janak had never appeased the sense organs of his body.

But the tables seemed to turn today—for at least once in his life now he wishes to watch the beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman with his eye-full and heart-full, and mind completely overwhelmed with its thoughts. This was indeed quite at odd with the character of Janak. So he himself was puzzled and amazed, and he says this clearly to sage Vishwamitra in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 216. The king told the sage—“Oh sage, it’s a wonder of all wonders that my mind that is inherently dispassionate seems to have lost its character when I saw the two brothers. So I wonder what the reason is; who are these two brothers? Surely and certainly, they aren’t ordinary princes of humans, but Divinity itself personified—for otherwise ‘tis not easy for my mind to be so swayed as it is at present at the very sight of these two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman. So, tell me oh sage, what is the truth?”]

The Lord (Sri Ram) is a treasury of nectar-like excellent virtues, noble characters, civility and virtuousness (*sīla-sudhākē agāra*), and is an endless and infinite source of great happiness and joy and comfort for all (*sukhamākē pārvāra*).

Janak tried his best and became tired but could not find the other end of it, or fathom it. [For all his wisdom and enlightenment had come to a naught, and Janak for once was swept off his feet with he unable to explain the reason himself.]

Not only was it Janak, but the eyes of the whole court (i.e. all those present in the royal assembly) was, as expected, transfixed on the divine form of the Lord (*lōcana lalaki lāgē*). Their minds and hearts becoming extremely enthralled and captivated with waves of surging love and affection for the Lord (*mana ati anurāgē*), while their intellect and subconscious were concentrated in only one form (i.e. the intellect and subconscious could think of nothing else except the form of Sri Ram and his stupendous beauty and charm) (*ēka rasarūpa cita sakala sabhākē*)! (3).

Every one established their own mental relationship with the Lord (Sri Ram) in accordance to their inclinations, tastes, temperaments and wishes².

Even Tulsidas has sought the refuge of the Lord who is worthy of the deepest of affections, one who is worthy for establishing relationships with, of remembrance, of service, and for taking refuge with (4).

[²When the actual bow-breaking ceremony was underway a little while later and the entire city had poured into the arena just to get a glimpse of these two wonderful boys with sage Vishwamitra, the same situation prevailed with the men and the women who assembled as spectators. Not only them, but even the invited guests, the countless kings and regents and princes and knights and nobles and grandees of the earth too viewed Lord Ram differently according to the way their mind, heart and intellect perceived the Lord.

This is explicitly described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

It says that those who were warriors saw the Lord as valour and bravery personified; those who were wicked in heart saw a frightening form of the Lord that chased their wits away and left them scampering for cover; those who were demons but disguised as humans saw Kaal, ‘the god of death’ right in front; the citizens saw the Lord as a personified and charming form of a perfect human being of the most excellent of virtues and personality; those who were wise and well-versed in the knowledge of the scriptures and understood their metaphysical and spiritual philosophy saw the Lord as a personified form of the almighty and all-pervading Supreme Brahm, the Lord God of creation; those who were devotees at heart saw in the Lord their revered and dearest deity whom they worship and adore and pay homage; king Janak and his close family saw in the Lord an image of someone who was one of them, dear to them as a member of their family (because later on Lord Ram would become their son-in-law by marrying Sita, the daughter of Janak); the ascetics and self-realised ones in the crowd found the Lord as an image of the supreme Consciousness and the Absolute Truth that gives bliss and ecstasy upon realisation; and Sita saw the Lord in an affectionate way that was the dearest form of all (as he would be her dear husband and life-partner shortly).]

(1 / 65)

ए कौन कहाँतें आए?

नील—पीत पाथोज—बरन, मन—हरन, सुहाय सुहाए ॥ 1 ॥

मुनि सुत किधौं भूप—बालक, किधौं ब्रह्म—जीव जग जाए।

रूप जलधिके रतन, सुछबि—तिय—लोचन ललित ललाए ॥ 2 ॥

किधौं रबि—सुवन, मदन—ऋतुपति, किधौं हरि—हर बेष बनाए।

किधौं आपने सुकृत—सुरतरुके सुफल रावरेहि पाए ॥ 3 ॥

भए बिदेह बिदेह नेहबस देहदसा बिसराए।

पुलक गात, न समात हरष हिय, सलिल सुलोचन छाए ॥ 4 ॥

जनक—बचन मृदु मंजु मधु—भरे भगति कौसिकहि भाए।

तुलसी अति आनंद उमगि उर राम लषन गुन गाए ॥ 5 ॥

(1/65)

ē kauna kahāntēm ā'ē?

nīla-pīta pāthōja-barana, mana-harana, suhāya suhā'ē.. 1..

muni suta kidhaurṁ bhūpa-bālaka, kidhaurṁ brahma-jīva jaga jā'ē.

rūpa jaladhikē ratana, suchabi-tiya-lōcana lalita lalā'ē.. 2..

kidhaurṁ rabi-suvana, madana-ṛtupati, kidhaurṁ hari-hara bēṣa banā'ē.

kidhaurṁ āpanē sukr̥ta-suratarukē suphala rāvarēhi pā'ē.. 3..

bha'ē bidēha bidēha nēhabasa dēhadasā bisarā'ē.

pulaka gāta, na samāta haraṣa hiya, salila sulōcana chā'ē.. 4..

janaka-bacana mṛdu mañju madhu-bharē bhagati kausikahi bhā'ē.

tulasī ati ānanda umagi ura rāma laṣana guna gā'ē.. 5..

King Janak's Enquiry-2

Verse no. 1/65—[King Janak continues with his enquiry with sage Vishwamitra—] 'Who art they and whence have they come hither? They are dark and fair complexioned like a blue and yellow lotus flower respectively (nīla-pīta pāthōja-barana), are extremely enchanting and captivating for the mind and heart (mana-harana), and are naturally lovely and comely and a provider of comfort and happiness to the beholder (suhāya suhā'ē)¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 215 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 217.]

Are these boys the sons of a sage or are they some great princes²?

Or are they a manifestation of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, who has revealed himself in a human form as a living being known as a 'Jiva' who is a microcosmic form of the macrocosmic supreme Soul³?

Are these two children not the jewel of the ocean representing beauty, charm and attractiveness, or are they the eyes of a beautiful damsel named 'Chhabi' (literally, a personified form of a painting or portrait so stupendously beautiful and enchanting that there is no match for it)?

Or else, is it that the two Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God), Kamdeo/cupid (the patron god of beauty, charm and glamour), and Basant (the Spring season which is deemed to be the king amongst seasons and one that brings cheer and greenery all around), or is it that Lords Vishnu and Shiva have assumed the body of humans and have come here (to bless me)?

Or is it that you (Vishwamitra) have found the fruits of the Kalpa Tree (the heavenly Tree of wish fulfillment) representing your noble, virtuous, meritorious and good deeds?

(In any case, there is no help but that thou tell me oh great sage, what amongst these possibilities are these two boys? I am confounded and struck with wonder of exceeding wonderment!)' (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 216.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216; and Chaupai line nos 4 that precedes Doha no. 217.]

Saying this, king Janak, who was known as 'Videha', lost awareness (consciousness) of his body and the surrounding world as his entire being was overwhelmed by the surging waves of love and affection for the two brothers. He lost consciousness of himself and his surroundings so much so that he forgot where he was, who he was, who was present there, and how he ought to behave and act⁴.

His body was thrilled and ecstatic; emotions of extreme happiness and joy overwhelmed his heart (and overflowed from it), and tears (of affection and exhilaration) welled up in his eyes. His heart delighted and his sight belighted at the marvelous and extremely enchanting view of the two brothers (4).

[⁴King Janak forgot for once that he is famed as 'Videha', one who was so highly self-realised and spiritually enlightened, having practiced complete restraint over his sense organs such as the eye that no charm of the external world was so strong as it would enchant him and captivate his mind to the extent that he would be numbed and dumbfounded for words. He had never felt bodily thrill by seeing anything in the physical world as he was witnessing today at the sight of Lord Ram and Laxman.

Never in his life had he been so mesmerized by any sight or view that he would look more than once at it or cast more than a fleeting glance at it just enough to sense its presence, but he never had allowed his mind and heart and subconscious to be overpowered by the charm and attractiveness of any image or scene so much that he would want to gaze at it transfixed. But everything has gone haywire and topsy-turvy today. So, what's the matter, he wondered.

For all his fame and pride of wisdom and enlightenment and dispassion and detachment from this world for which he was so renowned, Janak was for once astonished at his own behaviour as he lost his mental bearing and poise, and was literally swept off his feet at the sight of the amazing beauty of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, like a dazed person who knows not what befell him when the surging waves of

the ocean, which is under the influence of the full moon and is in high tide, just scoops him up and sweeps him off his feet as it takes him away with its receding waves!]

Vishwamitra very much appreciated Janak's sweet and pleasant words drenched with devotion⁵.

Tulsidas says that then Vishwamitra began to narrate and sing the glories, the eulogies, the famed virtues and the excellent characters and qualities of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman⁶ with his heart overflowing with intense joy and delight as he did so. [This narration is given in verse nos. 1/66—1/67 herein below.] (5).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 216.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

(1 / 66)

कौसिक कृपालहूको पुलकित तनु भौ ।
 उमगत अनुराग, सभाके सराहे भाग,
 देखि दसा जनककी कहिबेको मनु भौ ॥ 1 ॥
 प्रीतिके न पातकी, दियेहू साप पाप बड़ो,
 मख-मिस मेरो तब अवध-गवनु भौ ।
 प्रानहूते प्यारे सुत माँगे दिये दसरथ,
 सत्यसिंधु सोच सहे, सूनो सो भवनु भौ ॥ 2 ॥
 काकसिखा सिर, कर केलि-तून-धनु-सर,
 बालक-बिनोद जातुधाननिसों रनु भौ ।
 बूझत बिदेह अनुराग-आचरज-बस,
 ऋषिराज जाग भयो, महाराज अनु भौ ॥ 3 ॥
 भूमिदेव, नरदेव, सचिव परसपर
 कहत, हमहिं सुरतरु सिवधनु भौ ।
 सुनत राजाकी रीति उपजी प्रतीति-प्रीति,
 भाग तुलसीके, भले साहेबको जनु भौ ॥ 4 ॥

(1/66)

kausika krpālahūkō pulakita tanu bhau.
 umagata anurāga, sabhākē sarāhē bhāga,
 dēkhi dasā janakakī kahibēkō manu bhau.. 1..
 prītikē na pātakī, diyēhū sāpa pāpa baṛō,
 makha-misa mērō taba avadha-gavanu bhau.
 prānahūtē pyārē suta māmṅē diyē dasaratha,
 satyasindhu sōca sahē, sūnō sō bhavanu bhau.. 2..
 kākasikhā sira, kara kēli-tūna-dhanu-sara,
 bālaka-binōda jātudhānanisōm ranu bhau.

būjhata bidēha anurāga-ācaraja-basa,
 ṛṣirāja jāga bhayō, mahārāja anu bhau.. 3..
 bhūmidēva, naradēva, saciva parasapara
 kahata, hamahim surataru sivadhanu bhau.
 sunata rājākī rīti upajā pratīti-prīti,
 bhāga tulasikē, bhalē sāhēbakō janu bhau.. 4..

Sage Vishwamitra's Reply-1

Verse no. 1/66—(Hearing the pleasant words of Janak as in verses no. 1/64—1/65) The most merciful and kind sage Vishwamitra (who was also known as 'Kaushik' by the virtue of the name of the family in which he was born) was thrilled too.

Affection began to swell-up in his heart. He praised the good luck of the assembly. Seeing the (spellbound and enthralled) condition of king Janak, the sage's mind was inspired to speak (and enlighten the assembly about who Lord Ram and Laxman were) (1).

So, the sage began the narration thus—'The demons used to defile my fire sacrifice. So I thought over the matter and came to the conclusion that these demons were very sinful and vile. Therefore, it was not wise to show a pretence of friendliness towards them or appease them in any other way (in the hope that they would stop tormenting me and let me complete my fire sacrifice), and to curse them will also be sinful on my part (because showing anger, vengeance, revenge and wrath is uncharacteristic and unbecoming for a saint of my stature, as well as the fact that it was prohibited to do so while the fire sacrifice was underway).

Hence, I went to Ayodhya with this as an excuse (to do something to protect my fire sacrifice). I asked king Dasrath to lend me his two sons who are dearer to him than his own life¹. King Dasrath, who is the upholder of righteousness and truth, gave them (Sri Ram and Laxman) to me immediately though he had to suffer terribly at this parting (because he loves them very much), and his household became apparently deserted and lifeless as a consequence (of my bringing the two brothers with me)² (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 208.

²In spite of facing the certainty of sufferance from pain and grief at parting with the two princes, and the loneliness and deserted look of the entire place that was natural to follow in the absence of the two brothers who were the very life and soul of the king as well as of the entire royal family and the dearest of all the citizens of Ayodhya as well, the righteous king dutifully consented to my request and sent the two brothers with me. He truly thought that this sufferance was of no consequence as weighed against the rewards that accrue by being instrumental in protection of a fire sacrifice, for the latter offsets the former.]

At that time they (Sri Ram and Laxman) had a tuft of curly hairs on the crest of their heads, and a toy-like bow and an arrow in their hands². Thereafter, in due course, they

fought with the demons as if it was another of their playful activity (or was like a game for them)³.’

Hearing this, Janak was overwhelmed with astonishment and affection, and he asked with amusement, ‘Lord! Then were you able to complete your fire sacrifice?’

(Vishwamitra replied—) ‘Oh yes, you can witness it yourself (for it is very evident that I wouldn’t be here, and look happy and cheerful enough if it hadn’t been so!)’ (3).

[²Refer for instance Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/54, stanza no. 1 also.

³Refer for instance Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6, and verse no. 1/60, stanza no. 3 also.]

When the Brahmins (who were wise elders in the society), king Janak and his ministers heard these words of sage Vishwamitra, they were all amused and amazed, and said to each other—‘Indeed, the bow of Lord Shiva has become a boon like that of a Kalpa Tree for us (because Lord Sri Ram and his brother Laxman would not have come hither had it not been for the bow-breaking ceremony that is underway to decide who would Sita marry)’.

Hearing (sunata)⁴ what Janak (and his companions) concluded and the way he had interpreted his good fortune (rājākī rīti), Tulsidas says that a surge of love, affection, devotion, belief and faith has also emerged (or took birth or root) in his heart and mind (upajī pratīti-prīti).

He (Tulsidas) is very fortunate and extremely lucky (bhāga tulasikē) that he had become a devotee, a faithful follower, or literally a servant of such a Lord (bhalē sāhēbakō janu bhau)⁴. (4).

[4Why does Tulsidas cite king Janak to say that he considers himself very lucky that he has been a devotee and a servant of Lord Ram? Well, the answer is that when king Janak, who was a great renouncer and famed as one of the wisest men of his time, had become overwhelmed with love and affection for Lord Ram so much so that he minced no words and felt no shyness to acknowledge it, then surely Tulsidas needs no other proof or look anywhere else to convince himself that he was and is right in surrendering himself to Lord Ram and being his devotee and servant. Who is greater and more mightier and holy and divine and supreme than Lord Ram who is being adored by king Janak and also by Lord Shiva, both of whom have reached the acme of self-realisation, and have attained the highest form of truthful knowledge and enlightenment in their respective forms—Janak amongst all humans, and Shiva amongst all Gods.]

(1 / 67)

चार्यो भले बेटा देव दसरथ रायके ।
जैसे राम-लषन, भरत-रिपुहन तैसे,
सील-सोभा-सागर, प्रभाकर प्रभायके ॥ १ ॥
ताड़का सँहारि मख राखे, नीके पाले ब्रत,
कोटि-कोटि भट किये एक एक घायके ।
एक बान बेगही उड़ाने जातुधन-जात,

सुखि गये गात हैं, पतौआ भये बायके ॥ 2 ॥
 सिलाछोर छुवत अहल्या भई दिव्यदेह,
 गुन पेखे पारसके पंकरुह पायके ।
 रामके प्रसाद गुर गौतम खसम भये,
 रावरेहु सतानंद पूत भये मायके ॥ 3 ॥
 प्रेम—परिहास—पोख बचन परसपर
 कहत सुनत सुख सब ही सुभायके ।
 तुलसी सराहैं भाग कौसिक जनकजूके,
 बिधिके सुढर होत सुढर सुदायके ॥ 4 ॥

(1/67)

cāryō bhalē bēṭā dēva dasaratha rāyakē.
 jaisē rāma-laṣana, bharata-ripuhana taisē,
 sīla-sōbhā-sāgara, prabhākara prabhāyakē.. 1..
 tāṛakā samḥāri makha rākhē, nīkē pālē brata,
 kōṭi-kōṭi bhaṭa kiyē ēka ēka ghāyakē.
 ēka bāna bēgahī urānē jātudhana-jāta,
 sūkhi gayē gāta hairiṁ, patau'a bhayē bāyakē.. 2..
 silāchōra chuvata ahalyā bha'ī dibyadēha,
 guna pēkhē pārasakē paṅkaruha pāyakē.
 rāmakē prasāda gura gautama khasama bhayē,
 rāvarēhu satānanda pūta bhayē māyakē.. 3..
 prēma-parihāsa-pōkha bacana parasapara
 kahata sunata sukha saba hī subhāyakē.
 tulasī sarāhairiṁ bhāga kausika janakajūkē,
 bidhikē suḍhara hōta suḍhara sudāyakē.. 4..

Sage Vishwamitra's Reply-2

Verse no. 1/67—[Sage Vishwamitra informed king Janak, when the latter wished to know who the two princes accompanying the sage were, as follows:--]

‘All the four sons of king Dasrath are very handsome and lovely. Like Lord Sri Ram and Laxman (whom you are seeing here), Bharat and Shatrughan (their brothers and the other two sons of Dasrath) are also an ocean of virtuous characters and of magnificent beauty as well as are like a sun representing fame and glory¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309.]

They (Sri Ram and Laxman) slayed (the demoness) Tadka and protected my fire sacrifice perfectly, thereby upholding their vows¹. They fell millions of brave demon warriors by a single arrow each (i.e. they didn't have to use more than one arrow to slay thousands of

demons by a single shot). Many groups of demons simply flew away (or were pushed or thrown back) by their single arrow as if these demons with huge and heavy bodies were nothing but dried-up leaves flying around in a strong wind³ (2).

[²And what was this ‘vow’ that the two brothers kept? When the Gods, Mother Earth and sages had prayed to Lord Vishnu to protect them against the tyranny of the cruel demons who were killing and spreading mayhem with impunity, the Lord had promised them succour and had told them he would personally come down to earth accompanied by all his fractions, or all his powers, in the form of human princes, and then devise a method to take care of things. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

But this was said before Gods and others who were in an invisible form. So the Lord wished to go public with his vows and determination by declaring his intentions before ordinary people of the earth—and this exactly he did in the forest when he saw a heap of bones and upon enquiry was told that these were the remains of sages killed by the demons, whereby the Lord raised his hands and solemnly declared that he says on oath that he will free the earth from the scourage of demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

³During the process of protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, the two brothers were attacked by a huge demon army led by Marich and Subahu. While Subahu was burnt to ashes by a single fire-arrow, Marich was hit with a tip-less arrow which flung him off to a far away island in the middle of the ocean. The rest of the army was either annihilated or flung away like dried leaves are when whirled and taken away to god-only-knows-where during a severe storm. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210.]

Simply by the touch of Lord Ram’s toe at the corner of a stone, it transformed itself into the divine form of Ahilya (who had been suffering in this gross form due to some ancient curse upon her, and now being delivered from it she went back to heaven to reunite with her husband sage Gautam)⁴.

By the virtue of this single mystical feat it was shown and proved to the world at large that Lord Ram’s holy feet do possess great divine powers as if they were the gem known as ‘Pārasa’ (the philosopher’s stone believed to convert lesser metals into precious gold)⁵.

In this way, due to Lord Sri Ram’s benevolence, mercy and grace, Ahilya resumed her original divine form and was not only reunited with her husband Guru Gautam who got back his wife, but sage Shatanand (who was Janak’s court priest) too got back his mother. [Shatanand was the son of sage Gautam and his wife Ahilya] (3).’

[⁴Ahilya’s liberation has been described in verse nos. 1/57—to 1/59 herein above in this chapter Baal Kand of Geetawali.

⁵The Lord’s holy feet are likened to the ‘Pārasa Mani’ because they can fulfill all the wishes of the seeker, convert their grossness into sublimity, grant them honours which they hadn’t ever imagined even in their wildest of dreams, and ensure their deliverance and liberation. Ahilya had not even prayed to Lord Ram as stones can’t do that, but the all-knowing Lord knew the pains and the sufferings she was going through. She did not ask the Lord to touch her, but the merciful Lord blessed her without asking.

What more can any sinner expect? Who in this creation is more kind, merciful, gracious, benevolent and caring than Lord Ram?

With the exchange of such pleasing words (between king Janak and sage Vishwamitra), words that were soaked in affection and said reverentially, words that bespoke of good tidings and auspicious events, words that were naturally sweet and gave natural joy, delight and happiness—all those present on the occasion who heard them felt exhilarated and delightful.

Tulsidas says that Vishwamitra praised the good fortunes of Janak and said that when the Creator, who determines destiny, is favourable and happy with someone, all the dices fall in the person's favour (and everything and all circumstances become nice and convenient to suit his likings and needs) (4).

(1 / 68)

ये दोऊ दसरथके बारे।
 नाम राम घनस्याम, लखन लघु, नखसिख अँग उजियारे॥ 1॥
 निज हित लागि माँगि आने मैं धरमसेतु—रखवारे।
 धीर, बीर बिरुदैत, बाँकुरे, महाबाहु, बल भारे॥ 2॥
 एक तीर तकि हती ताडका, किये सुर—साधु सुखारे।
 जग्य राखि, जग साखि, तोषि ऋषि, निदरि निसाचर मारे॥ 3॥
 मुनितिय तारि स्वयंबर पेखन आये सुनि बचन तिहारे।
 एउ देखिहैं पिनाकु नेकु, जेहि नृपति लाज—ज्वर जारे॥ 4॥
 सुनि, सानंद सराहि सपरिजन, बारहि बार निहारे।
 पूजि सप्रेम, प्रसंसि कौसिकहि भूपति सदन सिधारे॥ 5॥
 सोचत सत्य—सनेह—बिबस निसि, नृपति गनत गये तारे।
 पठये बोलि भोर, गुरके सँग रंगभूमि पगु धारे॥ 6॥
 नगर—लोग सुधि पाइ मुदित, सबही सब काज बिसारे।
 मनहु मघा—जल उमगि उदधि—रुख चले नदी—नद—नारे॥ 7॥
 ए किसोर, धनु घोर बहुत, बिलखात बिलोकनिहारे।
 टर्यो न चाप तिन्हते, जिन्ह सुभटनि कौतुक कुधर उखारे॥ 8॥
 ए जाने बिनु जनक जानियत करि पन भूप हँकारे।
 नतरु सुधासागर परिहरि कत कूप खनावत खारे॥ 9॥
 सुखमा सील—सनेह सानि मनो रूप बिरंचि सँवारे।
 रोम—रोमपर सोम—काम सत कोटि बारि फेरि डारे॥ 10॥
 कोउ कहै, तेज—प्रताप—पुंज चितये नहिं जात, भिया रे!
 छुअत सरासन—सलभ जरैगो ए दिनकर—बंस—दिया रे॥ 11॥
 एक कहै, कछु होउ, सुफल भये जीवन—जनम हमारे।
 अवलोके भरि नयन आजु तुलसीके प्रानपियारे॥ 12॥

(1/68)

yē dō'ū dasarathakē bārē.
 nāma rāma ghanasyāma, lakhana laghu, nakhasikha amṡa ujjārē.. 1..
 nija hita lāgi māmgi ānē mairi dharamasētu-rakhavārē.
 dhīra, bīra birudaita, bāmīkurē, mahābāhu, bala bhārē.. 2..
 ēka tīra taki hatī tāḍakā, kiye sura-sādhu sukhārē.
 jagya rākhi, jaga sākhi, tōṣi ṛṣi, nidari nisācara mārē.. 3..
 munitiya tāri svayambara pēkhana āyē suni bacana tihārē.
 ē'u dēkhihairi pināku nēku, jēhi nrpati lāja-jvara jārē.. 4..
 suni, sānanda sarāhi saparijana, bārahi bāra nihārē.
 pūji saprēma, prasansi kausikahi bhūpati sadana sidhārē.. 5..
 sōcata satya-sanēha-bibasa nisi, nrpati ganata gayē tārē.
 paṭhayē bōli bhōra, gurakē samṡa raṅgabhūmi pagu dhārē.. 6..
 nagara-lōga sudhi pā'i mudita, sabahī saba kāja bisārē.
 manahu maghā-jala umagi udadhi-rukha calē nadī-nada-nārē.. 7..
 ē kisōra, dhanu ghōra bahuta, bilakhāta bilōkanihārē.
 ṭaryō na cāpa tinhatē, jinha subhātani kautuka kudhara ukhārē.. 8..
 ē jānē binu janaka jāniyata kari pana bhūpa hamīkārē.
 nataru sudhāsāgara parihari kata kūpa khanāvata khārē.. 9..
 sukhama sīla-sanēha sāni manō rūpa birañci samvārē.
 rōma-rōmapara sōma-kāma sata kōṭi bāri phēri ḍārē..10..
 kō'u kahai, tēja-pratāpa-punja citayē nahim jāta, bhiyā rē!
 chu'ata sarāsana-salabha jaraigō ē dinakara-bansa-diyā rē..11..
 ēka kahai, kachu hō'u, suphala bhayē jīvana-janama hamārē.
 avalōkē bhari nayana āju tulasikē prānapiyārē..12..

Lord Ram's Glories, Janak's Dilemma & Invitation to the Bow-Breaking Ceremony-1

Verse no. 1/68—[Sage Vishwamitra told king Janak—] 'These two boys are the sons of Dasrath. Out of these two, the one whose complexion as dark as a cloud is named 'Ram', while the other who is fair complexioned from toe-nail to tuft (or a bun of hairs) on the head (i.e. toe to head) is his younger brother called 'Laxman' (1).

I had brought these protectors of the law of Dharma (righteousness, probity, noble conduct, ethics and morality) for my own benefit and interest (which was to protect my fire sacrifice that was being constantly defiled by the demons)¹.

They are extremely courageous and have the virtue of fortitude, are valorous and brave, have great famed, possess unmatched strength of arms so much so that they are invincible in the battlefield, and are indeed very and incomparably strong, valiant, brave, courageous and virtuous (2).

[¹Refer: Verse nos. 1/66, stanza no. 2, and 1/67, stanza no. 2 herein above.]

He (Lord Ram) had slayed the demoness called Tadka by shooting a single arrow at her, thereby giving delight to all the saints, sages, seers and gods².

In a similar fashion they had protected the fire sacrifice, and have given satisfaction and joy to hermits and sages by killing the demons most scornfully (i.e. without showing any mercy and reluctance while slaying them)—the whole world is a witness to this³ (3).

[²It is because the sages and saints and gods were now sure that their saviour has come. No one could dare to even face Tadka, the ferocious demoness with a hellish look and an ogress to boot.

³Refer: Verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 2 herein above.]

Thereafter, having liberated the wife of the sage (i.e. Ahilya, wife of Gautam)⁴, they have arrived here to watch the Swayambar (i.e. the marriage ceremony of your daughter Sita) after having heard of your vows⁵.

Your good bow (of Lord Shiva), which has burned and tormented all the kings with the fire of shame, will be seen by him (Sri Ram) also (4).'

[⁴Refer: Verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 3 herein above.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.

Now, this is interesting. In Ram Charit Manas as cited above it is only said that the two brothers cheerfully joined the sage when they heard of the bow-breaking ceremony, but it is not explicitly said there what was the preset condition for being successful in this competition. This gives the impression that they agreed to go just for enjoyment and to watch this spectacular event. But here in Geetawali, it is clearly mentioned that Lord Ram and Laxman had known about the condition set for the winner of this bow-breaking ceremony which was actually a stiff competition rather than a pure religious ceremony organized to marry a girl.]

Hearing those words of the great sage, Janak joined his family members, his kith and kin, to praise the sage and honour him, but all the while his (Janak's) attention was on Lord Ram as he watched the latter from the corners of his eyes.

After having showed his due respect to sage Vishwamitra and worshipping him in a formal way, the king went back to his palace along with his retinue (5).

The king was torn between the pure, honest and truthful affection and a natural sense of endearment that had developed in his heart towards Lord Sri Ram and the sternness of his vows (that he would marry his daughter Sita to anyone who would lift and break Lord Shiva's hard and unyielding bow), he became thoughtful and pensive⁶. The whole night was spent by the king counting stars (i.e. he could not sleep even a wink because of his bewilderments, worries, dilemma and deep apprehension). At daybreak, he sent an invitation to them (Ram, Laxman, Vishwamitra). Then, accompanied by his Guru (Vishwamitra), the Lord (Sri Ram) entered the theatre (or the stadium or the venue where the bow-breaking ceremony was to be held)⁷ (6).

[⁶The king now regretted why he had made the condition of breaking of this bow a requisite for marrying Sita, his daughter. Had he known about Lord Ram, he would not have done so, but would have married his daughter straightaway to the Lord. But now he was on the horns of dilemma and in a deep pit of quandary—for if he broke his own vow at this late stage then it will not only give him a very bad name and ruin his immaculate

reputation as a man of truthful words, but would also create a great scandal. Refer: Verse no. 1/69, stanza no. 2 herein below.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 252.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 239—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 240.]

Hearing the news of the Lord's arrival, the citizens were jubilant, and they just forgot about whatso work they had been doing (or were about to do) even as all of them rushed towards the stadium/theatre of action (i.e. the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony)⁸ as if the rivers, swollen during the heavy and torrential downpour of the 'Magha Nakshatra', overflow their banks, and joined by their tributaries, streams and rivulets, they rush towards the ocean (7).

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240.

The 'Magha Nakshatra' is a special configuration of stars wherein heavy rains occur.]

All the spectators, thinking that they (Sri Ram and Laxman) were of tender age (i.e. are in their teens) while the bow was strong, sturdy and heavy, became worried and sullen. They contemplated over the matter gloomly and thought that about the formidable bow that could not be moved even by those warriors who were able to playfully uproot huge mountains (i.e. without much effort)⁹ (8).

[⁸The citizens were a worried lot because they had all wanted Lord Ram to marry Sita, their princess. But the problem was that the bow which needed to be lifted and broken was a major hurdle as it was of very stern and unyielding sort, being the bow of Lord Shiva. So they wondered how can it be lifted by these delicate and young children who were not even past their teens. It's literally too much to hope or expect it from them. This made them sulk with gloomy thoughts.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 257.]

The citizens talked amongst themselves—'It looks that Janak had not known them earlier, due to which he has made such a (stern and almost impossible to keep) vow and has invited other kings. Had it not been so, who would have been so foolish as to abandon and forsake an ocean of nectar and dig a well of unpotable water⁹? (9).

[⁹Had Janak known that their was such an eligible mate for Sita, would he ever have been so foolish to unnecessarily put Sita's fate on the dock and declare a Swayambar to be held? On the contrary, he would have directly approached Dasrath and offered Sita's hand to Sri Ram.

Here, Sri Ram's marriage to Sita is likened to an ocean of nectar, while the uncertainties, confoundedness and embarrassment of tying her future with a ridiculous vow of bow-breaking is likened to a well of bitter or unpotable water. Janak was now in a fix, not knowing what to do.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 222.]

The creator Brahma has created their (Lord Ram's and Laxman's) enchanting image by kneading a dough with a combination of such qualities as magnificence and beauty, virtuous and noble characters, and love and affection (*sukhamā sīla-sanēha sāni*).

He (the creator Brahma) has squeezed trillions of Moons and Kamdeo/cupids and poured their essence (i.e. beauty, glamour, magnificence, radiance and charm) on each of the pores of their bodies, and had then discarded the residual part¹⁰ (10).

[¹⁰Brahma has created everything in this creation. So when he decided to create these two princes in the most beautiful form he could, he picked up the Moon and the Kamdeo and extracted the best qualities from them. Then he poured out this essence on these two brothers before throwing away the useless pith. The imagery is so wonderful: it means that whatever good the Moon and Kamdeo are famous for had been extracted from them and vested with Lord Ram and Laxman. So, what we see of the Moon and Kamdeo now, being so beautiful and epitomes of loveliness and examples of attractiveness, is only a pith from which the actual essence had already been removed by squeezing them. In other words, one can very well imagine how wonderful and wondrous of all the wonders may have been the enchantment of the two princes, and how bewitchingly beautiful and exceptionally comely and handsome were their form and appearance!]

Someone says—'Oh brother! He (Lord Ram) is a centre (a focus; a fount) of dazzling splendour and glory high. This is why it is not possible to look at him (because of the dazzle and glare of his glories and splendorous qualities—just as it is not possible to look directly at the blazing sun in the sky).

He is like a brilliant lighted lamp of the Solar race (i.e. he is the most remarkable member of this race, and being of the "Sun's race" he has inherited the Sun's glorious qualities).

Verily I say that the moth-like bow would be reduced to ash as soon as he (Lord Ram) touches it¹¹. (11).

[¹¹Here, Lord Ram is like a lighted lamp, and the bow like a moth. The moth gets burnt as soon as the flame of the lamp touches it. Likewise, as soon as Lord Ram touches the bow, the latter would yield to him and get broken.

The analogy with the 'Sun' is indeed interesting. Lord Ram and the entire family of king Raghu are called descendants of the Sun or the Solar race. In other words, Lord Ram has inherited the qualities of the Sun—its brilliance, splendour, energy, dynamism and its ability to sustain life in the world, besides its quality to remove darkness of the night symbolizing the darkness of ignorance and delusions that cover the world.

Once the Sun makes its appearance in the horizon and the darkness is gone, all phantoms and ghosts too vanish, implying that all the demons are doomed once Lord Ram has taken birth in this world.]

Others said—'Oh Brother! No matter what, our life and birth has been successful and fruitful today because we have had an eye-full view of the Lord (Sri Ram) who is dearer to Tulsidas than his own life¹² (12).'

[¹²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 246.]

[Note—Stanzas 1-10 refer to both the brothers, Ram and Laxman. Hence the plural pronoun 'them', 'they' has been used, while stanza 11-12 refer to Sri Ram only.]

(1 / 69)

जनक बिलोकि बार-बार रघुबरको ।
 मुनिपद सीस नाय, आयसु-असीस पाय,
 एई बातैं कहत गवन कियो घरको ॥ 1 ॥
 नींद न परति राति, प्रेम-पन एक भाँति,
 सोचत, सकोचत बिरंचि-हरि-हरको ।
 तुम्हते सुगम सब देव! देखिबेको अब
 जस हंस किए जोगवत जुग परको ॥ 2 ॥
 ल्याए संग कौसिक, सुनाए कहि गुनगन,
 आए देखि दिनकर कुल-दिनकरको ।
 तुलसी तेऊ सनेहको सुभाउ बाउ मानो
 चलदलको सो पात करै चित चरको ॥ 3 ॥

(1/69)

janaka bilōki bāra-bāra raghubarakō.
 munipada sīsa nāya, āyasu-asīsa pāya,
 ē'ī bātairi kahata gavana kiyō gharakō.. 1..
 nīnda na parati rāti, prēma-pana ēka bhām'ti,
 sōcata, sakōcata biran'ci-hari-harakō.
 tumhatē sugama saba dēva! dēkhibēkō aba
 jasa hansa ki'ē jōgavata juga parakō.. 2..
 lyā'ē saṅga kausika, sunā'ē kahi gunagana,
 ā'ē dēkhi dinakara kula-dinakarakō.
 tulasī tē'ū sanēhakō subhā'u bā'u mānō
 caladalakō sō pāta karai cita carakō.. 3..

Lord Ram's Glories, Janak's Dilemma and Invitation to the Bow-Breaking Ceremony-2

Verse no. 1/69—Repeatedly watching (or glancing at) Raghubar (Lord Sri Ram), bowing his head at the feet of the sage (Vishwamitra), getting his permission and blessings, Janak then went home to his palace all the while talking (with his companions) about this subject (as detailed in the previous verses) (1).

His affection (for Lord Sri Ram) and vows (to marry Sita to the person who breaks the bow) are equally strong and inviolable. Hence, he is greatly worried, tormented and perplexed, and is unable to sleep during the night¹.

(Praying that his wishes be fulfilled, which was that Sita should be betrothed to Sri Ram—) He (Janak) puts the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Shiva (the concluder), in a quandary when he says, 'Oh Lords! It is possible to see everything get done and one's wishes fulfilled by your grace and kindness.'²

(Clever as he is—) He has made his good fame into a swan-like bird and takes care of both its wings³. (2).

[¹Refer: Verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 6 herein above.

²Janak is on the horns of a great dilemma. On the one hand he does not want to break his vows of marrying his daughter Sita to anyone who lifts and breaks an old and worn-out bow of Shiva that had been lying with his family for ages, a condition he had set to determine the strength and valour of the future husband of Sita. And on the other hand when he saw Lord Ram and heard his glories from someone as exalted and renowned as a truthful sage as Vishwamitra, he determined that Lord Ram was the most appropriate prince to be Sita's husband.

Now the reason for the perplexity was that at this late stage when the bow-ceremony was to be held the very next day and when hundreds of other kings and princes have already assembled for the purpose, to go back on his words and canceling the ceremony and marrying Sita directly to Lord Ram would cause an uproar and revolt as well as a huge scandal of unprecedented proportions, besides giving him and his entire family and race a bad name that would be impossible to erase. And Janak was correct in his apprehensions as would be clear a little while later when none of the invited competitors could move the bow even a bit, and Lord Ram effortlessly lifted and broke it into two. As soon as Sita put the victory garland on Lord Ram, all the failed kings and princes rose up in revolt, threatening to capture Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman and fighting Janak and his army should they intervene and take their side. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266.

So, Janak prays to the three chief Gods, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with the hope that they would find some way and contrive some device to fulfil his wishes as it is only possible for these three great Gods to change the course of destiny should they decide to help someone.

Now therefore, since 'Brahma' is the writer and determinor of destiny, if he be pleased he can create some last-minute situation, at the very end of the eleventh hour so to say, to ensure that Lord Ram is betrothed to Sita.

Lord Shiva to whom the bow actually belongs was the most competent Authority to turn the tide of events the way he wants—for he can ensure that the bow becomes very heavy and stubborn when all the assembled competitors try to lift it so that no one can break it, and when Lord Ram goes to try his hand at it the bow should become light as a feather and allow itself to be broken without offering any resistance.

And of course Lord Vishnu would help him if Brahma and Shiva agree because Vishnu always fulfils the wishes of his devotees, and would surely not go against the actions taken by Brahma and Shiva.

Janak for once, however, did not realise 'Vishnu' was the object of his adoration in his form as 'Lord Ram', and there the Lord was directly in his front and in his own city. Lord Vishnu is all-knowing and omniscient, and once the thought came in the mind of Janak it wasn't a secret from the Lord. And Janak was also unaware of the fact that Brahma and Shiva were privy to this development because it was on their prayer that Vishnu had consented to come down upon earth as Lord Ram.

³A swan is considered as the wisest bird with mystical powers as it is believed that it can separate water from milk, and picks up only pearls, which are symbolic of pristine pure wisdom, from an assortment of gems. Since Janak was regarded as a wise and enlightened and upright king, he is likened to a 'swan' here. His two wishes—one to keep his vow of marrying Sita to anyone who breaks Shiva's bow, and the other to have Lord Ram as Sita's husband—are like the two wings of this swan as they are diametrically opposite to each other and it is impossible to imagine that they would converge.

A bird flies only when its wings are open, and during flight it is not as stable as it was when sitting pretty on solid ground. Likewise, with the two opposite wishes unfolded in his mind, Janak was very restless and confounded. His mind was agitated because he could not settle on one option which would be like closing the wings of the bird and its coming down to rest.

Janak was therefore in a fix—not knowing what to do. So he has left the decision on the Trinity Gods to do what was best for him in the present circumstance. The two wings of the swan respectively represent his affection for Sri Ram and his desire to have him as his son-in-law, and his vows regarding the marriage of Sita which was tied to the breaking of the bow.]

Sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) had brought the two brothers (Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) and had narrated their great virtues and immense glories to king Janak (which had fascinated Janak no end inasmuch as that he had mentally chosen Lord Ram to be his future son-in-law).

Tulsidas says—Seeing the 'sun' of the Sun-race (*dinakara kula-dinakarakō*) (i.e. the most exalted Lord Sri Ram who was the best in the Solar race, and was as outstanding and remarkable in his glories and virtues as the brilliant sun is in the sky), king Janak's mind and intellect were filled with extreme affection for the Lord, and Janak was so overwhelmed with emotions that he lost his otherwise calm and composed bearing just like the leaves of a fig tree that sways under the influence of a breeze⁴ (3).

[⁴This was very uncharacteristic of Janak as he was known to be of a stable and calm mind and demeanours, rarely becoming emotional under any given circumstance. But when he was introduced to Lord Ram and the latter's glorious virtues enumerated by sage Vishwamitra, and when he noted Lord Ram's divine charm and beauty which were inherently heavenly by their nature, Janak was numbed and dumbfounded. His mind and intellect that were never affected by such physical things as beauty or influenced by anyone's glories and fame had, for once, lost their bearing and composure, making Janak emotional and sentimental like an ordinary person who is swept off his feet when he meets someone exceptionally charming and dignified.]

राग केदारा

(1 / 70)

रंग-भूमि भोरे ही जाइकै।
 राम-लषन लखि लोग लूटिहैं लोचन-लाभ अघाइकै॥ 1॥
 भूप-भवन, घर घर, पुर बाहर, इहै चरचा रही छाइकै।
 मगन मनोरथ-मोद नारि-नर, प्रेम-बिबस उठैं गाइकै॥ 2॥
 सोचत बिधि-गति समुझि, परसपर कहत बचन बिलखाइकै।
 कुँवर किसोर, कठोर सरासन, असमंजस भयो आइकै॥ 3॥
 सुकृत सँभारि, मनाइ पितर-सुर, सीस ईसपद नाइकै।
 रघुबर-करधनु-भंग चहत सब अपनो सो हितु चितु लाइकै॥ 4॥
 लेत फिरत कनसुई सगुन सुभ, बूझत गनक बोलाइकै।
 सुनि अनुकूल, मुदित मन मानहु धरत धीरजहि धाइकै॥ 5॥
 कौसिक-कथा एक एकनिसों कहत प्रभाउ जनाइकै।
 सीय-राम संजोग जानियत, रच्यो बिरंचि बनाइकै॥ 6॥
 एक सराहि सुबाहु-मथन बर बाहू उछाह बड़ाइकै।
 सानुज राज-समाज बिराजिहैं राम पिनाक चढ़ाइकै॥ 7॥
 बड़ी सभा बड़ो लाभ, बड़ो जस, बड़ी बड़ाई पाइकै।
 को सोहिहै, और को लायक रघुनायकहि बिहाइकै?॥ 8॥
 गवनिहैं गँवहिं गवाँइ गरब गृह नृपकुल बलहि लजाइकै।
 भलीभाँति साहब तुलसीके चलिहैं ब्याहि बजाइकै॥ 9॥

rāga kēdārā

(1/70)

raṅga-bhūmi bhōrē hī jā'ikai.
 rāma-laṣana lakhi lōga lūṭihairṁ lōcana-lābha aghā'ikai.. 1..
 bhūpa-bhavana, ghara ghara, pura bāhara, ihai caracā rahī chā'ikai.
 magana manōratha-mōda nāri-nara, prēma-bibasa uṭhairṁ gā'ikai.. 2..
 sōcata bidhi-gati samujhi, parasapara kahata bacana bilakhā'ikai.
 kumvara kisōra, kaṭhōra sarāsana, asamanjasa bhayō ā'ikai.. 3..
 sukr̥ta sambhāri, manā'i pitara-sura, sīsa īsapada nā'ikai.
 raghubara-karadhanu-bhaṅga cahata saba apanō sō hitu citu lā'ikai.. 4..
 lēta phirata kanasuṭ saguna subha, būjhata ganaka bōlā'ikai.
 suni anukūla, mudita mana mānahu dharata dhīrajahi dhā'ikai.. 5..
 kausika-kathā ēka ēkanisōrṁ kahata prabhā'u janā'ikai.
 sīya-rāma sanjōga jāniyata, racyō birañci banā'ikai.. 6..
 ēka sarāhi subāhu-mathana bara bāhū, uchāha baṛhā'ikai.
 sānuja rāja-samāja birājihairṁ rāma pināka caṛhā'ikai.. 7..
 baṛī sabhā baṛō lābha, baṛō jasa, baṛī baṛā'ī pā'ikai.
 kō sōhihai, aura kō lāyaka raghunāyakahi bihā'ikai?.. 8..

gavanihairṃ gamvahirṃ gavāmī garaba gr̥ha nr̥pakula balahi lajā'ikai.
bhalībhāmṭi sāhaba tulasikē calihairṃ byāhi bajā'ikai.. 9..

The citizens' hope, a day prior to the bow-ceremony, that Lord Ram would surely break the bow & marry Sita

Verse no. 1/70—[On the day before the actual bow-breaking ceremony was to be held, there was great excitement and anticipation in the air in Janakpur, and the only hot topic of discussion amongst the citizens of Janakpur was the possibility of Lord Ram breaking the bow and becoming eligible to marry Sita, and how this objective may be attained. All the people hoped that it would be so, and they prayed earnestly to the Gods that it was their collective wish and they are invoking all their collective good and meritorious deeds done in their lives that their this single prayer should be heard and requited—for they wanted that a permanent relationship be established between the kingdom of Janakpur and its royal family with the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, as that would certainly enhance the possibility of the brothers visiting the city again to meet their in-laws in some point in the future, thereby enabling the lucky citizens to see and meet and interact with them often in the times to come in the future.

Hence, there was anxiety and excitement and a lot of anticipation that day. Wherever one's eyes went one would find groups of citizens, men and women, huddled together debating this subject animatedly. Some sounded very optimistic and certain that it is sure that their wishes would be fulfilled, others were doubtful because of Janak's rigid vows.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258.

Even the assembled kings and princes who had come to participate in the bow-ceremony intuitively realized that it would be Lord Ram who will marry Sita by breaking the bow: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 245 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede it.

Hence, every single person was animatedly engaged in the discussion about what would happen the next day; who would be successful in breaking the bow and marrying Sita, and whether or not Janak would abandon his stubbornness. Everyone hoped that the lucky competitor turns out to be Lord Ram, but as of now things were still in the lap of an uncertain future.

So the citizens anxiously and animatedly discussed the matter thus:--]

'As soon as the day breaks tomorrow, the citizens shall converge in the stadium, and seeing Lord Sri Ram and Laxman, they shall enjoy the benefit of their eyes to their hearts' content.'¹ (1).

[¹We find in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 240 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that as soon as the word spread that Lord Ram and Laxman have gone to the venue of the bow-ceremony, there was a literal flood of citizens who left whatso work they were engaged in and rushed to take their seats early so that

they would take the front rows to have a better view of the brothers. The tide was so huge and unexpected that king Janak had to depute special ushers to seat the whole crowd in an orderly manner.]

Everywhere—whether it is in the palace of the king, or within and without the city (i.e. within the walls of the city or in the surrounding suburbs, villages and the countryside), in every household, market place and nook and corner—it is the main theme of discussion. All the men and women folk, being ecstatic and jubilant at their immense good fortune, speak only about this one topic (concerning the bow-ceremony and who would emerge the victor) (2).

Wondering what the Creator is inclined to do and apprehensive of what he has stored for them as tidings for the next day, everyone was very worried, pensive and sullen, saying to each other, 'Brother, it is a great dilemma and a perplexing situation—the boys (Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) are very young in age and tender in form, while the bow that is to be broken is very hard, strong and formidable. [So, how will any one of them will be able to break the bow?² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 223 where this dilemma is expressed by the womenfolk of Janakpur, and one wise amongst them answers it also by saying that “one should not be misled by their tender age and delicate form for these two brothers possess stupendous mystical and mysterious powers as they have not only crushed mighty demons who had sent chill down the spine of the greatest warriors and were deemed to be invincible, but have also provided liberation to Ahilya by the mere touch of the toe”; (ii) from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 257 where a similar doubt was raised by Sita’s mother queen Sunayana, and was similarly answered by her close companions; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258 where Sita herself has this doubt in her mind.

A similar idea is expressed herein below in verse no. 1/78, stanza no. 3 of this book ‘Geetawali’.]

On this wise, everyone invoked all the good and meritorious deeds done in their lives (sukṛta sambhāri), and sincerely prayed to their ancestors, Gods, Shiva, Vishnu and other deities by bowing their heads before them (manā'i pitara-sura, sīsa īsapada nā'ikai), pleading with them to requite them now for all their good and meritorious deeds and treating this single event of the breaking-of-the-bow as something that directly related to them personally and affected their happiness and well-being (saba apanō sō hitu citu lā'ikai) so that Raghubar (Lord Ram) should be able to break the bow with his own hands (raghubara-karadhanu-bhaṅga) (4).

The women-folk carry the 'kanasuṭi'³ here and there, while the men summon the soothsayers and astrologers and ask them for good signs and omens⁴.

Upon getting favourable answers from them (both the Kansui and the soothsayers), the excited citizens run hither and thither with happy and contented minds, gathering courage to tide over their perplexities, consternations and dilemmas (because

they are well nigh sure that their wishes would be fulfilled and Lord Ram would definitely marry Sita by breaking the formidable bow) (5).

[³Village women make small idols of 'Gauri', the divine goddess who bestows good fortunes, using cowdung. They put it in a sieve and fling it to the ground. If the tiny idols fall face-up, it is considered a good omen and portend success, but if the idols falls face-down or on its side then it is considered as a bad sign and indicative of failure of the enterprise. This traditional practice of determining if the desired objective would be attained or not is called 'kanasuṭ'.

⁴The men-folk adopt other ways to guess the outcome in the future—they consult astrologers and oracles. They ask them to observe the signs of Nature and deduce if there are positive signals that their wishes would be fulfilled, or if these natural signs foretell something to the contrary.]

Everyone now talked of sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), and about his immense glories, stellar virtues and good name, even as they enthusiastically narrated to each other all about the remarkable tidings that the great sage had brought here and revealed concerning the two brothers to king Janak and his companions⁵.

All the citizens were now convinced that it appeared in all sooth and in all probability that the Creator had indeed destined the union of Lord Sri Ram and Sita (6).

[⁵Whatever transpired between sage Vishwamitra and king Janak had now spread to all the parts of the city. Janak had himself been so excited that he divulged all the good news to the members of the royal family, and his courtiers and attendants and elders of the city who had accompanied him when he went to meet sage Vishwamitra spread the happy tidings amongst the citizens and the common folk of the city.

By this time everyone was aware of the greatness of the sage as he was a highly reputed and revered sage of his time. Everyone was now privy to whatever the sage had to tell about the great deeds and achievements of Lord Ram and Laxman—such as about these two boys belonging to a great and reputed noble royal family of the Solar race, of their valiant deeds and strength of arms and courage and fearlessness as they effortlessly faced and slayed the demons and perfectly protected his fire sacrifice, and how Ahilya was mysteriously liberated by the mere touch of the toe of Lord Ram, a deed in itself most mystical and amazing. Then there was the news of how king Janak had been smitten by love and affection at the sight of Lord Ram.

The citizens deduced that it surely was not without reason that Vishwamitra had brought the two brothers with him to Janakpur, especially during the course of holding of a stiff competition like a bow-breaking event. It was surely done because the great sage knew of some great honour that would come to these two princes towards whom he was so much highly obliged. Surely, the sage would not have otherwise brought them hither to face the prospect of being faceless just like any one of the countless princes and kings in the milling crowd of competitors to face anonymity and neglect—because that would be highly inappropriate for the sage to treat someone who has done him so great favour in this way instead of rewarding him with the best of rewards available. And what better reward was there than to gift Lord Ram with the hand of Sita in marriage; what better way would the sage find to thank Lord Ram's father king Dasrath than to send his son back to him with a bride who was like the jewel of the world!

So, all the citizens logically concluded that putting everything together it was abundantly clear that the pointer is towards Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying Sita.]

Someone tried to bolster the morale (of the citizens and the household of Janak) by describing the way Lord Ram had slayed the demon Subahu by raising his arms and using the bow. This gentleman said—‘Lood Brothers! It is for certain that Sri Ram would string the bow and raise it in his arms to make his presence felt in the assembly of kings and princes in the royal court just as he had raised his arms that held the bow when he had slayed the demon Subahu’ (7).

‘Because’, he continued, ‘who else is there in this large gathering, except Raghunāyaka (Sri Ram), who is more exalted and great enough to be eligible to acquire the fairest of fame, the greatest of name, the glorious of glories, the highest of honour and rarest of acclaim that would be bestowed to someone who can establish himself in this great assembly? Say, who else other than Lord Ram can stand the test that would bring the mightiest of mighty glory and fame that has no parallel upon him by the virtue of having the hand of Sita in marriage? (8).

Therefore now, oh brothers, be assured that whereas on the one hand all other kings and princes shall lose their pride and vanity by sacrificing them on the altar symbolized by this bow (as no matter how hard they all try none of them would be able to move the bow an inch), and having suffered a crushing defeat they would all lower their heads in shame and ignominy and go back home with a sullen face, and on the other hand the Lord of Tulsidas, (‘sāhaba tulasikē’; i.e. Lord Ram) would emerge triumphant and go home victorious (after marrying Sita and completing the marriage rites) to the accompaniment of music and songs and pomp and pageantry and ceremony befitting the happy occasion.’ (9).

पुष्पवाटिकामें

राग टोड़ी

(1 / 71)

भोर फूल बीनबेको गये फुलवाई हैं ।
सीसनि टिपारे, उपबीत, पीत पट कटि,
दोना बाम करनि सलोने भे सवाई हैं ॥ 1 ॥
रूपके अगार, भूपके कुमार, सुकुमार,
गुरके प्रानअधार संग सेवकाई हैं ।
नीच ज्यों टहल करैं, राखैं रुख अनुसरैं,
कौसिक—से कोही बस किये दुहुँ भाई हैं ॥ 2 ॥
सखिनसहित तेहि औसर बिधिके सँजोग
गिरिजाजू पूजिबेको जानकीजू आई हैं ।
निरखि लषन—राम जाने ऋतुपति—काम,

मोहि मानो मदन मोहनी मूड़ नाई हैं ॥ ३ ॥
 राघौजू—श्रीजानकी—लोचन मिलिबेको मोद
 कहिबेको जोगु न, मैं बातें—सी बनाई हैं ।
 स्वामी, सीब, सखिन्ह, लषन तुलसीको तैसो
 तैसो मन भयो जाकी जैसिये सगाई हैं ॥ ४ ॥

Puṣpavāṭikā mēm Rām

rāga ṭōṛī

(1/71)

bhōra phūla bīnabēkō gayē phulavā'ī haiṁ.
 sīsani ṭipārē, upabīta, pīta paṭa kaṭi,
 dōnā bāma karani salōnē bhē savā'ī haiṁ.. 1..
 rūpakē agāra, bhūpakē kumāra, sukumāra,
 gurakē prāna'adhāra saṅga sēvakā'ī haiṁ.
 nīca jyōm ṭahala karaiṁ, rākhaiṁ rukha anusaraiṁ,
 kausika-sē kōhī basa kiyē duhum' bhā'ī haiṁ.. 2..
 sakhinasahita tēhi ausara bidhikē samjōga
 girijājū pūjibēkō jānakījū ā'ī haiṁ.
 nirakhi laṣana-rāma jānē ṛupati-kāma,
 mōhi mānō madana mōhanī mūṛa nā'ī haiṁ.. 3..
 rāghaujū-śrījānakī-lōcana milibēkō mōda
 kahibēkō jōgu na, mairiṁ bātairiṁ-sī banā'ī haiṁ.
 svāmī, siba, sakhinha, laṣana tulasikō taisō
 taisō mana bhayō jākī jaisiyē sagā'ī haiṁ.. 4..

Lord Ram's visit to the Royal Garden to pluck flowers for sage Vishwamitra's
 worship rituals & His meeting Sita there-I

Verse no. 1/71—[As it happened, on the first day of their arrival at Janakpur, Lord Ram and Laxman had gone sight-seeing in the city, and it was then that the citizens had an opportunity to meet and become enchanted by the two brothers as has been narrated in verse nos. 1/67—to 1/70 herein above.

The next morning, sage Vishwamitra needed flowers for his worship rituals. So he asked Lord Ram and his brother to go and fetch some. In their search for flowers, the brothers went to the royal garden, and after getting permission from the keepers who immediately recognized them, they went in and roamed around plucking suitable flowers as needed.

Meanwhile, since this was the day when the bow-ceremony was to be held later on, Sita was sent by her mother to offer special prayers to the family deity in the garden palace, seeking the deity's blessings so that an appropriate groom is found for Sita.

Now, as destiny had destined, one of Sita's maids had gone alone to explore the garden independently, and somewhere she saw the two brothers. She immediately rushed back and conveyed the news to the rest of their friends, and implored upon them to come in haste and not miss on this most wonderful opportunity to see two lovely princes wandering freely in the garden, and as is the wont of maidens of their age, it was too strong a temptation to resist. So, the group with Sita in its center headed to that part of the garden where Lord Ram and Laxman were plucking flowers. Thus arrived an opportunity when both Lord Ram and Sita came face to face with each other, and it was like 'love at first sight' for both of them. Sita determined in her heart that this prince was the true desire of her inner being and if Lord God ever wished to fulfill her desires then let she be betrothed to this prince. Her silent resolve was reciprocated by Lord Ram too who also decided that he would do things that fulfill Sita's inner quest.

With this firm resolve in her mind and heart, Sita then went to the family temple and prayed most earnestly to the deity she had come to worship, which happened to be Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva and the universal patron deity of women, specially unmarried girls seeking a good and appropriate husbands for themselves, that she be betrothed to Lord Ram and none else. Goddess Parvati blessed Sita that her wishes would be fulfilled in full.

All these happenings have been narrated in fine detail in Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 236 as well.

Now, let's resume our reading of "Geetawali". As is the pattern adopted in this book by Tulsidas, we shall observe that the narrative is in the 'present tense' to indicate that the author is mentally transported, in a subtle and ethereal form, to that point of time and era when the events were actually taking place, and hence his narrative is like a true scribe's description of events in the way he witnesses them first hand unfold before his eyes, albeit 'mental eyes' if not physical, and therefore are authentic narratives. This fact is abundantly clear in stanza no. 4 of this verse. Let's read on:]

As soon as it was dawn, Lord Sri Ram and Laxman arrived at the royal garden to pluck flowers (for Vishwamitra's daily morning worship rituals). They have a cap on their heads, a sacred thread around their necks, Pitambar around their waists, and a bowl of flowers in their left hands, as a result of which their beauty and charm has increased by a full quarter. [That is, the 'flowers in their hands' have enhanced their natural prettiness, their inherent charm, their usual attractiveness and magnificence by almost a quarter of what it normally was. For this was the first and rare view of the two brothers with flowers in their hands in addition to their usual attire and things they carried on them, such as the cap, the sacred thread, the Pirambar etc.] (1).

Verily, both the brothers are inherently a treasury of beauty, charm and magnificence (*rūpakē agāra*). They are royal princes (*bhūpakē kumāra*), tender and delicate in form (*sukumāra*), and so dear to their Guru (Vishwamitra) that they are like the latter's very life and soul (*gurakē prāna'adhāra*). They have come with the Guru to serve him diligently like true and dedicated disciples (*saṅga sēvakā'i haim*).

While serving their Guru, they (do not behave like princes but) act like a faithful, loyal, meek and lowly servant serving his master (*nīca jyōm ṭahala karaim*), always

eager and ready to obey orders obediently and do the Guru's bidding, and personally ensuring that all their actions conform to the Guru's wishes (*rākhairṁ rukha anusarairṁ*).

The result of this service and dedication was that they (the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman) have managed to successfully bring sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra)—who was renowned for his anger and short temper (*kausika-sē kōhī*)—under their sway (i.e. made him calm and self-restraint and loving and caring when it came to dealing with the two princes: *basa kiyē duhum' bhāī hairṁ*) (2).

As it was destined by the Gods, Sita arrived there (in the royal garden) to offer worship to Goddess Parvati. There she saw Lord Sri Ram and Laxman and thought to herself that they were 'Basant', the king of seasons, and 'Kamdeo/cupid', the patron deity of beauty, present there in person.

She was so amazed, spellbound and enthralled on seeing them as if Kamdeo/cupid had cast a magical spell of enchantment upon her mind (3).

The feeling of exhilaration, and of joy and affection which emerged mutually in the hearts of Lord Ram and Sita when their eyes met each other is beyond description. I (Tulsidas) have just hinted at it¹.

At that moment, amongst all those present at the time there—such as Lord Sri Ram, Sita, her maids (companions), Laxman and Tulsidas²—a mental relationship was mutually established between them which was in consonance with and in accordance to their inherent inclinations, temperaments, emotions, sentiments and thoughts towards each other³ (4).

[¹Tulsidas is wise enough to leave details to one's imagination. He does not specify what transpired when Sri Ram and Sita saw each other. Tulsidas wishes to maintain the highest standards of decorum, dignity and modesty in his writings, and does not wish to violate basic norms of good writing when describing such intimate moments. After all, Lord Ram and Sita were not two humans, a prince and a princess, meeting each other and falling heads over heels in love, but human forms of the supreme Divinity, of 'Brahm' and his 'Shakti' respectively, and one ought to be very careful and guarded and conscientious and dignified when dealing with such subjects that have a spiritual and sublime dimension.

²As for Tulsidas, Sri Ram was his Holy Father, Sita was his Holy Mother, while the maids and Laxman were standing as witnesses to this unfolding of the divine story of their union. Tulsidas considers himself as being extremely lucky to be a witness too. After all, no other human being was privy to this moment when Lord Ram had first met Sita, so this was really a great privilege that was granted to Tulsidas.

Further, he has sort of silently stood in attendance in what was supposed to be a very private moment to show that he is a very close confidante of Lord Sri Ram as much as Laxman is. And therefore, he too has as much a right of way over his Lord Sri Ram as Laxman has.

Sita was accompanied by her handmaidens who would vouch for her integrity and safe conduct and solemnly declare that no untoward incident occurred in the garden that may taint the immaculate reputation of Sita in way should any evil scandal or nasty gossip erupt. So, Lord Ram too wanted someone to bear witness for him in case any such

nasty enventuality cropped up unexpected because there are many jealous souls full of malice and ill-will in their heart and mind who are always on the look-out to kick up a storm if they get the slightest hint of any wrong-doing.

Hence, the Lord allowed Tulsidas, albeit secretly, to become his witness and see first hand whatever transpired in the garden between the Lord and Sita. Laxman was his brother, and if the former tried to defend his brother in case of some accusation of wrong-doing or misdemeanour or of any kind of disgraceful act, the people would say he is taking sides with his sibling inspite his knowing that all was not clean. But if an outsider such as Tulsidas swore on oath and stood witness that nothing amiss or unethical or disgraceful or uncivilized happened in the garden during the brief encounter between Lord Ram and Sita, except their seeing each other from a very respectable distance without a single word being exchanged or gesture made in any way whatsoever, his words would bear weight as it would be the testimony of an outsider and an independent witness.

³Lord Ram and Sita thought of each other as eternal partners which they actually were in the primary form as Lord Vishnu and his divine consort goddess Laxmi, the handmaidens of Sita thought of themselves as the damsels of heaven, and Laxman and Tulsidas played the role of witnesses and close friends of the Lord.]

(1 / 72)

पूजि पारबती भले भाय पाँय परिकै ।
 सजल सुलोचन, सिथिल तनु पुलकित,
 आवै न बचन, मन रह्यो प्रेम भरिकै ॥ 1 ॥
 अंतरजामिनि भवभामिनि स्वामिनिसों हौं,
 कही चाहौं बात, मातु अंत तौ हौं लरिकै ।
 मूरति कृपालु मंजु माल दै बोलत भई,
 पूजो मन कामना भावतो बरु बरिकै ॥ 2 ॥
 राम कामतरु पाइ, बेलि ज्यों बौड़ी बनाइ,
 माँग-कोषि तोषि-पोषि, फैलि-फूलि-फरिकै ।
 रहौगी, कहौगी तब, साँची कही अंबा सिय,
 गहे पाँय द्वै, उठाय, माथे हाथ धरिकै ॥ 3 ॥
 मुदित असीस सुनि, सीस नाइ पुनि पुनि,
 बिदा भई देवीसों जननि डर डरिकै ।
 हरषीं सहेली, भयो भावतो, गावतीं गीत,
 गवनी भवन तुलसीस-हियो हरिकै ॥ 4 ॥

(1/72)

pūji pārabatī bhalē bhāya pām̐ya parikai.
 sajala sulōcana, sithila tanu pulakita,
 āvai na bacana, mana rahyō prēma bharikai.. 1..
 antarajāmini bhavabhāmini svāminisōm haur̐,

kahī cāhaurṁ bāta, mātu anta tau haurṁ larikai.
 mūrati kṛpālu marṇju māla dai bōlata bha'ī,
 pūjō mana kāmanā bhāvatō baru barikai.. 2..
 rāma kāmataru pā'i, bēli jyōm bauṇṛī banā'i,
 māmṅa-kōṣi tōṣi-pōṣi, phaili-phūli-pharikai.
 rahaugī, kahaugī taba, sāmčī kahī ambā siya,
 gahē pāmṃya dvai, uṭhāya, māthē hātha dharikai.. 3..
 mudita asīsa suni, sīsa nā'i puni puni,
 bidā bha'ī dēvīsōm janani ḍara ḍarikai.
 haraṣīm sahēlī, bhayō bhāvatō, gāvatīm gīta,
 gavanī bhavana tulasīsa-hiyō harikai.. 4..

Lord Ram in the Royal Garden-2

Verse no. 1/72—[After seeing Lord Ram and deciding in her inner-self that if there is anyone whom she would like to marry then it is the Lord, she went to the temple of goddess Parvati and prayed to the deity, silently expressing her heart-felt desire to the goddess and beseeching her, pleading with her to fulfill it, but it was done silently and only at the mental level, without explicitly saying anything in words, to avoid embarrassment for herself as well as for the fear of giving her parents a very bad name for violating the norms and traditions of the time that required that the girl should not pre-determine and hook her heart on someone whom she would like to marry, especially when her parents haven't been taken into confidence by her earlier and they have organized a 'Swayambar' to decide who would be her future husband.

When a 'Swayambar' is held, the parents set certain conditions, and whoso meets these conditions marries their daughter. Though this may seem not in good taste and even cruel on the girl as she has no say in the entire matter though it is she who is directly affected and her entire future happiness depends upon this marriage, but in the tradition-bound society of ancient times it was deemed fit to leave the decision on the parents of a girl to determine in good faith how and who would marry their daughter. Any overt sign on the part of the girl that would hint at her falling for some stranger and losing her heart to him without the knowledge of her parents was deemed to be unethical and scandalous, and it would cast an indelible stain on her and raise questions about her purity and virginity.

This incidence of Sita praying to goddess Parvati and seeking the latter's blessings so that her hidden wishes be fulfilled has also been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Doha no. 236.]

Sita fell at the feet of Goddess Parvati and most reverentially worshipped her. Her eyes became wet, and she could not utter a word as her body had become so thrilled with emotions that it was virtually numbed into speechlessness. Her mind was overwhelmed with emotions of affection and love, and she could not therefore think and speak coherently (1).

[She prayed to goddess Parvati and somehow managed to collect her wits to request the deity—] 'Oh Mother (Goddess) (mātu)! You are all-knowing and well aware of the inner thoughts of all creatures (antarajāmini). You are the dear divine consort of Lord Shiva (bhavabhāmini), and since the Lord is the Lord God of this creation, it follows that you are its supreme Mistress (svāminisōm haum).

I am like a child to you (tau haum larikai), and therefore (excuse me for my audacity) as I want to divulge the secret of my heart to you without hesitation (kahī cāhaum bāta tau).

Then the idol of Bhavani (Parvati), who is an embodiment of kindness, compassion, mercy and grace (mūрати krpālu), offered her (Sita) an attractive garland (mañju māla dai)¹ and said, 'Sita! Be blessed. I have accepted and I respect what is in your heart (pūjō mana kāmanā). You are free to accept your groom as per your internal wishes, and thus feel contented and fulfilled (bhāvatō baru barikai) (2).

[¹It is believed that when one is offering a prayer to any consecrated image of a deity with some desire in one's mind, and one of the garlands on the idol shifts and falls down on its own, then the prayer is deemed to have been accepted by the worshipped deity and the person's wishes would be fulfilled. It is considered a good sign.]

Having acquired the all wish-fulfilling heavenly 'Kalpa Tree' in the form of (or in the person of) Lord Sri Ram (rāma kāmataru pā'i), you would make it your eternal abode and support like a creeper finds its own abode and support around an evergreen tree (bēli jyōm bauṇṇi banā'i)².

Verily, you shall be blessed with the auspicious reward of having eternal company of your Lord from whom you will never be separated (māmga tōṣi), and also endowed with a blessing of fertility that would bear auspicious fruits (children) for you (kōṣi pōṣi). Indeed, you will prosper, be happy and contented (literally, 'grow and develop, bearing fruits and flowers like a creeper' — phaili-phūli-pharikai).

Oh Sita! In due course of time ahead, when the tidings of events to come would prove to you the soothness of mine words, verily then you will be convinced of the soothfastness of what I say now and concede that 'Amba' ('mother') was truthful in what she said (rahaugī, kahaugī taba, sāmčī kahī ambā)³.

[When Parvati had said her saying and prophesying what Sita's future held for her, she (Sita) was overjoyed. So—] Sita then fell at the feet of the Goddess and clasped it in both her hands with the greatest of reverence (as a gesture of sincere thanksgiving and to express her exceeding joy and delight; gahē pāmṃya dvai), while the Goddess on her part put her boon-granting benign hands on her head and (affectionately) lifted her (uṭhāya, māthē hātha dharikai)⁴ (3).

[²Here, Lord Ram is likened to a 'Kalpa Tree', the all wish-fulfilling Tree of the Gods, and Sita to a creeper that finds its support and succour as it winds itself around a tree. Without the tree the creeper has no other means of support and habitat; for a creeper the tree is all that matters for it. If the tree is cut, the creeper dies too. If the tree grows, becomes huge, and bears branches, fruits and flowers, the creeper feels exceedingly glad as it can also grow and spread around the trunk and the branches of the tree, finding shade from its foliage and a good environment for growth and development because it

gets its nourishment from the tree. The healthier and greener the tree, it is so much better for the creeper.

Likewise, Sita would be happy and contented for life as her husband, Lord Ram, has an eternal life. The Lord fulfills the desire of the whole world, so it is only natural that Sita won't lack anything at all.

³Goddess Parvati wished to emphasise upon Sita that she must trust what the Goddess has said and have faith in her. Only time would tell her that whatso the Goddess had said was right and truthful. So Sita should not doubt her prophesies.

⁴A very significant hint is given in this single event. Everyone knows that the idol installed in any shrine is made of a gross material, whether it is stone, wood, mud or metal. On the face of it it looks absolutely impossible and incredulous even to imagine that such a gross thing as an idol made of stone or wood or metal would show signs of life—giving a garland, speaking, bending to pick up the devotee who is lying prostrated in front. But herein lies the 'magic and importance of faith', for verily if the devotee does have the depth and sincerity and intensity of faith in the deity he worships, that seemingly lifeless idol gets injected with a 'spark of divinity' and begins to move and speak just like a creature's gross body that is inherently lifeless and gross like the stone idol in question, but begins to shows signs of life once the 'spark of super consciousness' enters it and makes it alive.]

Hearing the blessings uttered by the Goddess, Sita was extremely happy, contented and delighted (*mudita asīsa suni*).

Sita bowed her head repeatedly at the Goddess' feet (*sīsa nā'i puni puni*), took leave of her (*bidā bha'ī dēvīsōm*) fearing that it was getting too late and her mother would question her as to why was she so late and what kept her loitering for so long in the garden (*janani ḍara ḍarikai*).

The accompanying friends and maids of Sita were cheerful now (*haraṣīm sahēlī*) when they observed her delighted countenance, as they came to the conclusion that a favourable outcome is a certainty and that Sita's wishes have been fulfilled (*bhayō bhāvatō*).

So the party consisting of Sita and her friends happily wended their way back to the palace, merrily singing and rejoicing all the while (*gāvatīm gīta, gavanī bhavana*).

Meanwhile, even as they left the place (garden) and went towards the palace it appeared that they had stolen the mind and intellect of Tulsidas' Lord, Sri Ram (*'tulasīsa-hiyō harikai'*)⁵ (4).

[⁵In other words, Lord Ram, who was silently watching Sita and her friends from a distance, felt sad when he saw them go away. He would have preferred if Sita had tarried for some more time in the garden. It was literally like Sita had stolen his heart and now was going away with it. This is a poetic way of saying a simple thing that Lord Ram was so smitten by Sita's love and affection, he was so enthralled and captivated by her sight, that when she left for home the Lord felt forlorn and lost.

Now, when we consider this single event against the backdrop of the fact that Lord Ram was not an ordinary 'human being' but an incarnate 'Supreme Being', it seems the picture does not fit well inasmuch as it is not expected from and behoves of such a highly exalted Soul who is supposed to be the 'Lord of the World' to behave in a petty

way like an ordinary creature called the 'Jiva' who gets attracted to physical beauty and enchanted by the opposite gender. But there are some apparent reasons for the Lord behaving in such a worldly fashion: (i) For one thing, Lord Ram was currently in a 'human form', and he wished to show the world the normal failings of a human being, the latter's natural inclinations, emotions and sentiments, how a person is taken for a ride by his own sense organs which overwrite what the mind and intellect advise, and about his inability to resist so many worldly temptations; (ii) Secondly, he was an 'expert actor', and wished to show the world that once a person assumes a particular role he must play it to perfection; and (iii) He wished to keep his 'true identity hidden and secret' so that the main enemy, the demons to eliminate whom the Lord had come to this physical world and had assumed a gross form of a human, are not hinted about who he actually is, for then there were chances that they would go and hide somewhere inaccessible, making the mission all the more tough for the Lord.

It is not bad to have normal emotions if they are not tinged with evil intentions, it such emotions do not make a person feel guilty of conscience. In any case, should his conscience prick, what should he or she do then? The answer is provided in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 237 where it is said that "—While praising the charm and beauty of Sita in his (Lord Ram's) heart, the two brothers went back to their Guru (sage Vishwamitra). When they reached there, Lord Ram told Kaushik (Vishwamitra) everything that transpired (without concealing anything) because his heart was pure and simple, and no conceit or deceit ever touched it."

So, what's the message? It's clear—to confess, come clear, and hide nothing from one's Guru and parent if the heart is to be kept clean and pure'. A person would conceal things only when he has some bad intention in his heart.]

रंगभूमिमें

(1 / 73)

रंगभूमि आए, दसरथके किसोर हैं ।
 पेखनो सो पेखन चले हैं पुर-नर-नारि,
 बारे-बूढ़े, अंध-पंगु करत निहोर हैं ॥ 1 ॥
 नील पीत नीरज कनक मरकत घन
 दामिनी-बरन तनु रूपके निचोर हैं ।
 सहज सलोने, राम-लषन ललित नाम,
 जैसे सुने तैसेई कुँवर सिरमौर हैं ॥ 2 ॥
 चरन-सरोज, चारु जंघा जानु ऊरु कटि,
 कंधर बिसाल, बाहु बड़े बरजोर हैं ।
 नीकेकै निषंग कसे, करकमलनि लसै
 बान-बिसिषासन मनोहर कठोर हैं ॥ 3 ॥
 काननि कनकफूल, उपबीत अनुकूल,
 पियरे दुकूल बिलसत आछे छोर हैं ।
 राजिव नयन, बिधुबदन टिपारे सिर,

नख—सिख अंगनि ठगौरी ठौर ठौर हैं ॥ 4 ॥
 सभा—सरवर लोक—कोक—नद—कोकगन
 प्रमुदित मन देखि दिनमनि भोर हैं ।
 अबुध असैले मन—मैले महिपाल भये,
 कछुक उलूक कछु कुमुद चकोर हैं ॥ 5 ॥
 भाईसों कहत बात, कौसिकहि सकुचात,
 बोल घन घोर—से बोलत थोर—थोर हैं ।
 सनमुख सबहि, बिलोकत सबहि नीके,
 कृपासों हेरत हँसि तुलसीकी ओर हैं ॥ 6 ॥

raṅgabdhūmimēm

(1/73)

raṅgabdhūmi ā'ē, dasarathakē kisōra haim.
 pēkhanō sō pēkhana calē haim pura-nara-nāri,
 bārē-būrḥē, andha-paṅgu karata nihōra haim.. 1..
 nīla pīta nīraja kanaka marakata ghana
 dāminī-barana tanu rūpakē nicōra haim.
 sahaja salōnē, rāma-laṣana lalita nāma,
 jaisē sunē taisē'ī kumvara siramaura haim.. 2..
 carana-sarōja, cāru jaṅghā jānu ūru kaṭi,
 kandhara bisāla, bāhu barē barajōra haim.
 nīkēkai niṣaṅga kasē, karakamalani lasai
 bāna-bisiṣāsana manōhara kaṭhōra haim.. 3..
 kānani kanakaphūla, upabīta anukūla,
 piyarē dukūla bilasata āchē chōra haim.
 rājiva nayana, bidhubadana ṭipārē sira,
 nakha-sikha aṅgani ṭhagaurī ṭhaura ṭhaura haim.. 4..
 sabhā-saravara lōka-kōka-nada-kōkagana
 pramudita mana dēkhi dinamani bhōra haim.
 abudha asailē mana-mailē mahipāla bhayē,
 kachuka ulūka kachu kumuda cakōra haim.. 5..
 bhā'īsōm kahata bāta, kausikahi sakucāta,
 bōla ghana ghōra-sē bōlata thōra-thōra haim.
 sanamukha sabahi, bilōkata sabahi nīkē,
 krpāsōm hērata hamṣi tulasīkī ōra haim.. 6..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-1

Verse no. 1/73—[When the time arrived for the commencement of the ‘bow-breaking ceremony’, king Janak sent out his chief priest, Shatanand, and other chief courtiers and ministers of his royal court to go and invite sage Vishwamitra to come and attend the spectacular event. As soon as the sage learnt that the ceremony was about to start, he immediately headed there with Lord Ram and Laxman. Everyone in the city was eagerly waiting to know whether or not the two brothers would attend the function. So as soon as the word went round that they have accompanied the sage to the venue, the whole city virtually poured in the arena, jamming it chock-a-block.

The following verse nos. 1/73—to 1/80 herein below describe the scene inside and outside the venue, emphasizing the way the people were excited and electrified, expecting that the outcome of this competition would be according to their hearts’ wishes—which of course was that Lord Ram would be the one who would break the bow.

This part of the story has also been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 239—right upto Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 249.]

‘Dasrath’s sons have arrived at the Arena (‘*raṅgabhūmi*’; i.e. the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony)’—hearing this news, all the citizens, the women and the men, dashed towards the site to watch the spectacle; even the children and the old, the blind and the physically handicapped are requesting them to take them along (1).

Both the brothers (Sri Ram and Laxman) resemble a blue and yellow lotus, gold and emerald, or dark cloud and lightening respectively in their countenance and general complexion, and are literally the essence (or a personified form) of beauty, glamour and magnificence. They are naturally handsome and lovely (with nothing artificial with them). Their attractive names are ‘Sri Ram’ and ‘Laxman’ respectively, and as was previously heard, they are the best among all the princes of this world and also in the midst of the assembled princes (who have come to participate in the bow ceremony) (2).

Their feet resemble the lotus flower; their thighs, knees and waists are attractive as well, while their shoulders are broad and their arms are very strong and muscular. They have tied very beautiful quivers around their waists, whilst each of them hold in his lotus-like hands an attractive and hard (strong, sturdy) bow and an arrow (3).

They have golden ear-rings in their ears, a lovely sacred thread around their necks, while a Pitambar (a seamless body wrapping cloth of yellow silk) with lovely designed borders adorns their bodies.

Their eyes resemble a lotus, while the face is like the full moon. There is a cap on the head. Verily, each part of their bodies, from the toe-nail to the tuft of hair on the head, appears to be dotted by ‘Thagaurī’¹ (4).

[¹The word ‘*thagaurī*’ means ‘to stand still for a while’; ‘to be so amazed by a beautiful sight that one is stunned as if in a state of numbness’. The sight and the form of

the two brothers was so exceptionally enchanting and comely that all those who saw them were mesmerized, and their eyes were riveted on them. There were hundreds of princes and kings attending the bow-ceremony, but the two brothers were the cynosure of all eyes.]

The grand assembly (of invited princes and kings) is like some excellent pond or lake, while the people who were assembled there (i.e. the citizens and the good-intentioned invitees) were like lotus and the bird couples known as Chakva and Chakvi (the ruddy goose; ostrich).

Seeing Lord Sri Ram rise like the Sun God, they are very pleased and contented at heart, while the mind of ignorant and malicious kings—some of whom are like owls, while others resemble lilies and the Chakor birds (the Indian red-legged partridge)—are becoming gloomy, dejected and darkened in spirit.² (5).

[²Tulsidas has used this metaphor because the lotus flower and the bird couple of ‘Chakva and Chakvi’ feel glad when the sun rises. The lotus opens its petals, while the birds, which had separated from each other the previous night after the sun had set at dusk, come together once again.

The opposite prevails with the lilies and the bird known as ‘Chakor’. Both feel glad under the moonlight, and as soon as the sun rises they become gloomy—i.e. the lily closes its petals and the bird droops its head and hides somewhere for the day.

The idea expressed here is that when Lord Ram, who is compared to the ‘Sun’, made his presence felt in the venue, the citizens and the good-natured kings and princes felt very glad and happy, while those who were evil-minded, malicious and jealous by nature were not only annoyed but even loathed the Lord’s sight. These latter sort of people felt an inferior complex rearing its depressive head inside their hearts, and apprehended that Lord Ram would break the bow and marry Sita, thereby robbing them of this trophy. Watching the general mood of the citizens and observing the way the host, king Janak, was giving the two brothers special treatment, these mean-minded invitees feared that the king would devise some device to break his own condition by a royal decree and marry Sita to Lord Ram, thereby subjecting them to insult and humiliation.

Hence, as soon as Lord Sri Ram appeared on the scene, the citizens felt jubilant and hopeful, while the gathered kings and princes who had come to break the bow and be rewarded with the trophy of having Sita in marriage felt sullen and crestfallen at the prospect of their insult and humiliation should the host king either allow Lord Ram to try his hands at the bow or suddenly rescind on his own words and marry Sita to the coveted prince, Sri Ram, by royal decree.]

[The citizens are closely watching and taking note of the dignified and civil ways of Lord Ram and his excellent manners. They observe that:--] When he (Lord Sri Ram) talks with his brother (Laxman), he speaks softly and in a low polite tone, almost as if hesitant to do so, due to the presence of Vishwamitra. He speaks only a few words at a time (and is not a chatter box), and even then his voice is authoritative and serious like the grave rumblings of a cloud in the distance (and not shrill and sharp like an excited boy attending a circus for the first time).

The Lord is in front of everyone (i.e. he greets everyone who happens to come in front of him), looks at everyone with a benevolent and kind glance (i.e. his glance seems

to welcome all and he makes eye-contact with everyone present), and he is even looking towards Tulsidas with a kind, merciful and benignant smile³ (6).

[³Here once again we note the use of the present tense in the narrative instead of the past tense. So once again it reminds of the fact that what Tulsidas is saying is like a live narration of the events as they are unfolding at Janakpur, and not some description based on notes or some other version of this epic story.

Tulsidas was not writing or re-telling some ancient history to establish himself as a poet or a historian or or a scribe or anything else. It must be remembered that he was a devotee of Lord Ram, not an ordinary devotee but someone spiritually elevated and attained. He had reached such heights of spiritual attainment that he could be in direct communion with his beloved Lord, Sri Ram. He would close his eyes and transport his soul to that plane of ethereal existence where things are eternal and permanently etched on the canvas of time. Since we can't imagine it and know about it, since we have not reached that state of transcendental existence as reached by few great hallowed souls of yore nor have the ability or the wherewithal to do while surrounded by the grossness of worldly life as it is, it does not mean that others had not attained this high level of spiritual living, and that whatever the latter say is merely a fairy tale, an imaginary story, all cooked-up hogwash and hearsay.

Therefore, we must have faith when Tulsidas says that he was present at the venue amongst the ordinary citizens to watch his beloved Lord Ram attend the bow-breaking ceremony. Indeed it may be beyond the comprehension and logic of the common mind that it could have really been so, but there are certain things in life that have an ethereal dimension, and go beyond comprehension and logic from the physical perspective of the gross world.

Hence, Tulsidas' narrative of the events is like a live commentary by a modern-day journalist who covers such events, and therefore is most authoritative, original and first hand.]

(1 / 74)

एई राम-लषन जे मुनि-सँग आये हैं।
 चौतनी-चोलना काछे, सखि! सोहैं आगे-पाछे,
 आछेहुते आछे, आछे आछे भाय भाये हैं॥ 1॥
 साँवरे गोरे सरीर, महाबाहु महाबीर,
 कटि तून तीर धरे, धनुष सुहाये हैं।
 देखत कोमल, कल, अतुल बिपुल बल,
 कौसिक कोदंड-कला कलित सिखाये हैं॥ 2॥
 इन्हहीं ताडका मारी, गौतमकी तिय तारी,
 भारी भारी भूरि भट रन बिचलाये हैं।
 ऋषि मख रखवारे, दसरथके दुलारे,
 रंगभूमि पगु धारे, जनक बुलाये हैं॥ 3॥
 इन्हके बिमल गुन गनत पुलकि तनु
 सतानंद-कौसिक नरेसहि सुनाये हैं।
 प्रभु पद मन दिये, सो समाज चित किये

हुलसि हुलसि हिये तुलसिहुँ गाये हैं ॥ 4 ॥

(1/74)

ēī rāma-laṣana jē muni-samṅga āyē haiṁ.
 cautanī-cōlanā kāchē, sakhi! sōhaiṁ āgē-pāchē,
 āchēhutē āchē, āchē āchē bhāya bhāyē haiṁ.. 1..
 sām̐varē gōrē sarīra, mahābāhu mahābīra,
 kaṭi tūna tīra dharē, dhanuṣa suhāyē haiṁ.
 dēkhata kōmala, kala, atula bipula bala,
 kausika kōdaṇḍa-kalā kalita sikhāyē haiṁ.. 2..
 inhahīṁ tāḍakā mārī, gautamakī tiya tāī,
 bhārī bhārī bhūri bhaṭa rana bicalāyē haiṁ.
 ṛṣi makha rakhavārē, dasarathakē dulārē,
 raṅgabhūmi pagu dhārē, janaka bulāyē haiṁ.. 3..
 inhakē bimala guna ganata pulaki tanu
 satānanda-kausika narēsahi sunāyē haiṁ.
 prabhu pada mana diyē, sō samāja cita kiyē
 hulasi hulasi hiyē tulasihum̐ gāyē haiṁ.. 4..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-2

Verse no. 1/74—[The ladies of the city say—] 'These two princes are the ones who are named 'Ram' and 'Laxman', and they have come with sage Vishwamitra.

Oh Friend, look! Wearing a cap and a vestment (Pitambar) draped over their bodies, they look most magnificent and majestic as they walk one behind the other. They are the most exalted among the best, and are adorned with (or possess) the best of qualities, virtues and characters (1).

Their bodies have dark and fair complexion respectively. Their arms are very strong, muscular and long—for verily, they are great warriors.

A quiver adorns their waists, and a bow their hands. They are very tender, pleasing and beautiful to look at, and are peerless in valour and strength.

Sage Vishwamitra has expertly taught them the 'art of using the bow' ('kōdaṇḍa-kalā')¹ (2).

[¹This statement is very significant in the context of the 'bow-breaking' ceremony. Sage Vishwamitra was an expert teacher and a learned sage of great repute who was famous for his knowledge of the marital arts. He had prepared Lord Ram for this event by teaching the two brothers the intricacies of the knowledge pertaining to the bow: every fine detail of it, such as about its construction, what are its strong and weak points, how to hold it so that it does not snap while shooting an arrow or how it would break if not held properly, and so on. Therefore, Lord Ram was taught about the science that went into the making of a bow as well as its use under different conditions of the

battle-field. This knowledge had prepared the Lord to skillfully tackle any bow of any make and size.

The citizens therefore hinted to each other by way of mutual encouragement and to keep the spirit of hope alive that though this particular bow is very rare and formidable, being the bow of Lord Shiva, but there is no fear from that quarter as Lord Ram has already been trained by sage Vishwamitra to tackle such bows. The other competing princes would only rely on the strength of their arms in an attempt to break the bow, but they would not know how to tackle this unique bow with special in-built qualities not known to everyone except to an expert. So it does not matter if Lord Ram's body is tender and he is young in age; what matters here is specialized knowledge to deal with a technical problem that needs more power of the brain than of the brawn.

It's like the case of modern-day weapons. They are so complicated and technically advanced that only a person well-trained in them would be able to use them, let alone disassemble them and take their individual parts apart in an orderly manner which is different from smashing the weapon to the ground to break it.]

They have slayed Tadka and have liberated Ahilya even as they have caused agitations and instilled fear among the great, valiant and brave warriors in the battle².

Presently, these two princes of Dasrath—who are the protectors of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice—have come to the Arena at the invitation of Janak (3).

[²This refers to the vanquishing of the demon warriors in the battle that took place while Lord Ram and Laxman protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.]

Both sages Shatanand and Vishwamitra were thrilled as they described and recounted their (Sri Ram and Laxman's) immaculate character and glorious virtues to king Janak³.

Tulsidas says that he too has concentrated his mind and intellect in the lotus-like feet of the Lord (Sri Ram). He remembers those magnificent moments of hope and expectation, and the memory of that scene fills his heart with gladness and exhilaration as he sings the glories of his Lord with joy and delight exceedingly swelling and spilling over from his heart (4).

[³Sage Vishwamitra had told Janak about the glories of the two brothers when the two met in the very beginning as the sage arrived at Janakpur.

Sage Shatanand was the court priest of king Janak. He must have talked about the two brothers sometime after the meeting with Vishwamitra as it is sure that king Janak must have consulted his priest on the subject of options left open to him if he desires to marry this wonderful prince to his daughter.]

राग कान्हरा

(1 / 75)

सीय स्वयंवरु, माई दोउ भाई आए देखन ।
 सुनत चलीं प्रमदा प्रमुदित मन,
 प्रेम पुलकि तनु मनहुँ मदन मंजुल पेखन ॥ १ ॥
 निरखि मनोहरताई सुख पाई कहैं एक—एक सों,

‘भूरिभाग हम धन्य, आलि! ए दिन, एखन’ ।
 तुलसी सहज सनेह सुरँग सब
 सो समाज चित-चित्रसार लागी लेखन ॥ 2 ॥

rāga kānharā

(1/75)

sīya svayambaru, mā'ī dō'u bhā'ī ā'ē dēkhana.
 sunata calīm pramadā pramudita mana,
 prēma pulaki tanu manahum' madana marjula pēkhana.. 1..
 nirakhi manōharatā'ī sukha pā'ī kahaim ēka-ēka sōm,
 'bhūribhāga hama dhan'ya, āli! ē dina, ēkhana'.
 tulasī sahaja sanēha suram'ga saba
 sō samāja cita-citrasāra lāgi lēkhana.. 2..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-3

Verse no. 1/75—'Oh Mother¹! Look, the two brothers have come to watch Sita's Swayambar (the marriage ceremony)'—as soon as the women-folk heard it, they were extremely exited as if they were going to have a look at Kamdeo/cupid with a delighted and joyful mind (1).

[¹This address indicates that the children are speaking to their mothers. The men rushed out of their homes first to go and take their seats in the stadium where the bow-breaking was to be held. The women were hesitant as they usually did not venture out of their homes, though of course they too were equally eager to go and see the ceremony like their male counterparts. The males had been reluctant to take the children along for fear of them creating noise and nuisance at the venue as is the wont of young children who are terribly excited at the opportunity of witnessing a spectacular event. So, these excited children rushed inside their homes and poked their mothers to come out and head to the ceremony, because should they agree then haply this would give the children a chance to go as well.]

Seeing their (Sri Ram's and Laxman's) beauty, charm, comeliness and magnificence, they felt pleased and satisfied in their minds and hearts, and said cheerfully to each other, 'Oh friend! Today we are very fortunate and our lucks are praise worthy ('bhūribhāga hama dhan'ya, āli) that we are able to witness such a good day with so much nice things happening before us (ē dina, ēkhana).'

Tulsidas says that using the paint and colour symbolizing the emotions of natural affection and endearment towards the Lord (*sahaja sanēha suramṅga*), they (the women-folk) started to paint the picture of that spectacular and rare scene (of the assembly of kings and princes with Lord Sri Ram and Laxman occupying the centre-stage, or may be the exclusive portrait of Lord Ram and Laxman by neglecting everything else) on the canvas of their mind and intellect (*sō samāja cita-citrasāra lāgi lēkhana*) (2).

राग गौरी

(1 / 76)

राम—लषन जब दृष्टि परे, री ।
 अवलोकत सब लोग जनकपुर मानो बिधि बिबिध बिदेह करे, री ॥ 1 ॥
 धनुषजग्य कमनीय अवनि—तल कौतुकही भए आय खरे, री ।
 छबि—सुरसभा मनहु मनसिजके कलित कलपतरु रूप फरे, री ॥ 2 ॥
 सकल काम बरषत मुख निरखत, करषत, चित, हित हरष भरे, री ।
 तुलसी सबै सराहत भूपहि भलै पैत पासे सुढर ढरे, री ॥ 3 ॥

rāga gaurī

(1/76)

rāma-laṣana jaba drṣṭi parē, rī.
 avalōkata saba lōga janakapura mānō bidhi bibidha bidēha karē, rī.. 1..
 dhanuṣajagya kamanīya avani-tala kautukahī bha'ē āya kharē, rī.
 chabi-surasabhā manahu manasijakē kalita kalapataru rūpa pharē, rī.. 2..
 sakala kāma baraṣata mukha nirakhata, karaṣata, cita, hita haraṣa bharē, rī.
 tulasī sabai sarāhata bhūpahi bhalai paita pāsē suḍhara ḍharē, rī.. 3..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-4

Verse no. 1/76—'Oh Friend! Ever since Sri Ram and Laxman have been seen by the people of Janakpur, those who saw them are behaving as if the Creator has created numerous 'Videhas'¹ (1).

[¹The word 'Videha' literally means a person who is unconscious, unaware or unconcerned about his body and surroundings. Here it means that the citizens have become so charmed and enthralled by the captivating sight of the two princes that they

have become unconcerned about their routine day to day household chores and affairs of daily life. They all forgot about their age and their status in the hierarchy of society, as everyone talked animatedly and cheerfully about Lord Ram and Laxman and shared bits of information and news that came their way with others irrespective of age and gender. Those who were old and sick forgot for a moment about their physical limitations and behaved like excited children, wishing to go to the arena. Everyone became so occupied with this development that personal matters related to their bodies and household affairs were relegated to the background and completely neglected as if they were non-existent.]

Just at that time (i.e. when many of the citizens were still winding up their affairs and preparing to go the arena, or were on their way, and the crowd was still jostling and pushing to enter the venue), the two brothers appeared at the main venue, that was excellently laid out, in a spectacular and dramatic manner².

Their appearance there gave the impression that in the beautiful assembly of the heaven attended by gods, two identical images of Kamdeo (the patron god of beauty and charm) has appeared in the guise of two Kalpa Trees laden with ripe and succulent fruits symbolising beauty, charm and loveliness³ (2).

[²Until the time the two brothers entered the arena, the place, especially the central stage where the king and special guests would be seated, looked empty though the rest of the invited kings and princes had already arrived and taken their seats. But as soon as the brothers arrived, all eyes turned towards them. It's like the case when the chief guest arrives at a function. Till he comes there is noise and bustle all around as everyone is restless, sitting and talking amongst themselves waiting for the arrival of the chief dignitary, but as soon as he enters the venue all fall silent and take their seats in deference to his honourable presence which marks the start of the function.

³Here, Lord Ram and Laxman are likened to the two images of Kamdeo, while the assembly of great kings and princes of the world as well as the fine way the venue has been decorated and prepared to celebrate the occasion is like the heavenly court of the gods.]

Oh dear (rī)! By merely watching their (Lord Ram's and Laxman's) lovely faces, all the desires of a person are abundantly fulfilled as if the desired things are raining down upon him aplenty (sakala kāma barāṣata mukha nirakhata).

Therefore the sweet faces of the two brothers not only cause the mind and subconscious to get attracted towards them (because of their stupendous beauty and charm: karaṣata, cita) but they also bestow immense gladness and joy to one's heart (as one's desires are fulfilled--hita haraṣa bhare).

Tulsidas says that everyone praises and lauds king Janak and his immensely good luck as all the dices have been cast in his favour, and he has got an excellent opportunity to fulfill his desires to his heart's content (3).

(1 / 77)

नेकु, सुमुखि, चित लाइ चितौ, री।

राजकुँवर-मूरति रचिबेकी रुचि सुबिरचि श्रम कियो है कितौ, री॥ १॥

नख—सिख—सुदंरता अवलोकत कह्यो न परत सुख होत जितौ, री।
 साँवर रूप—सुधा भरिबे कहँ नयन—कमल कल कलस रितौ, री॥ 2॥
 मेरे जान इन्हँ बोलिबे कारन चतुर जनक ठयो ठाट इतौ, री।
 तुलसी प्रभु भंजिहँ संभु—धनु, भूरिभाग सिय मातु—पितौ, री॥ 3॥

(1/77)

nēku, sumukhi, cita lā'i citau, rī.
 rājakumvara-mūrati racibēkī ruci subirañci śrama kiyō hai kitau, rī.. 1..
 nakha-sikha-sudanratā avalōkata kahyō na parata sukha hōta jitau, rī.
 sāmvara rūpa-sudhā bharibē kaham' nayana-kamala kala kalasa ritau, rī.. 2..
 mērē jāna inhairm bōlibē kārana catura janaka ṭhayō ṭhāṭa itau, rī.
 tulasī prabhu bhañjiharim sambhu-dhanu, bhūribhāga siya mātu-pitau, rī.. 3..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-5

Verse no. 1/77—[One of the enchanted ladies of the city shares her feeling of joy and excitement at the charming sight of the two brothers with her close friend when she asks the latter to focus her attention on the marvelously wonderful image of Lord Ram and Laxman.]

‘Oh my sweet-faced dear friend (sumukhi, rī)! Examine carefully and imagine what great and special efforts the Creator must have made (subirañci śrama kiyō hai) when he wished to give effect to his desire to create an image or form as captivating, charming and attractive as these two princes (Lord Ram and Laxman) (rājakumvara-mūrati racibēkī ruci)! (1).

Oh dear friend (rī)*! One cannot describe sufficiently the amount of happiness and delight, as well as the ecstatic feeling of joy and exhilaration that one gets on seeing their beauty and magnificence (avalōkata kahyō na parata sukha hōta jitau) that extends from their toe-nails right upto the tuft of hair on the crest of their heads (nakha-sikha-sudanratā) (because this image makes the heart delighted and the sight belighted).

Oh dear friend (rī)! Empty your pitchers represented by your lotus-like eyes (nayana-kamala kala kalasa ritau) in order to fill them with the symbolic nectar (sudhā bharibē kaham') consisting of this image in the form of the two princes who are of a dark and fair complexion respectively (sāmvara rūpa) (and who are equally beautiful, lovely, pretty and comely)¹ (2).

[¹Here, the enchanted lady is unable to conceal her emotions of joy and excitement. She exorts her close friend to focus her attention on the two princes and closely examine their exceptional charm. This lady had her eyes riveted on the two brothers even as she bent her head and brought her mouth close to the friend's ears to

speak these pleasing words, or it may be that she was speaking aloud to a group of her friends standing close to her.

By telling her friends to ‘empty the symbolic pitcher of their eyes so that the nectar in the form of the sight of the two princes can be filled in them’, the lady wished to exhort them to stop wasting their time and energy of the eye in looking here and there at the wonderful spectacle of the bow-ceremony, but instead use this opportunity to put their eyes to good use by focusing them on Lord Ram and Laxman and having their eye-fill of this marvelous sight, an opportunity they would miss for life if they do not bring this image inside their inner being right now through the medium of the eye.]

Oh dear (rī), it seemeth to me (mērē jāna) that the clever king Janak (catura janaka) has organized this grand spectacle of pomp and pageantry (ṭhayō ṭhāṭa itau) just as an excuse so that these two princes could be invited (inhair̥m bōlibē kārana).

Oh dear friend (rī)! It seemeth sure to me that Tulsidas’ Lord (tulasī prabhu; i.e. Lord Ram) would certainly break the bow of Lord Shiva (bhañjihair̥m sambhu-dhanu). Indeed, the parents of Sita are very lucky and fortunate (‘bhūribhāga siya mātu-pitau’; that they will have the Lord as their son-in-law).’ (3).

[Note--*In the text, each line ends with ‘rī’. From the perspective of a poem it is a style to create the effect of rhyming of verses. From the view point of narration it implies that the lady uses the phrase ‘oh my dear’ every now and then after a brief pause.

This pattern is observed in verse nos. 1/77—to 1/79.]

राग सारंग

(1 / 78)

जबतें राम—लषन चितए, री ।

रहे इकटक नर—नारि जनकपुर, लागत पलक कलप बितए, री ॥ 1 ॥

प्रेम—बिबस माँगत महेस सों, देखत ही रहिये नित ए, री ।

कै ए सदा बसहु इन्ह नयनन्हि, कै ए नयन जाहु जित ए, री ॥ 2 ॥

कोउ समुझाइ कहै किन भूपहि, बडे भाग आए इत ए, री ।

कुलिस—कठोर कहाँ संकर—धनु, मृदुमूरति किसोर कित ए, री ॥ 3 ॥

बिरचत इन्हहिं बिरचि भुवन सब सुंदरता खोजत रित ए, री ।

तुलसिदास ते धन्य जनम जन, मन—क्रम—बच जिन्हके हित ए, री ॥ 4 ॥

rāga sārāṅga

(1/78)

jabatēṁ rāma-laṣana cita'ē, rī.

rahē ikaṭaka nara-nāri janakapura, lāgata palaka kalapa bita'ē, rī.. 1..

prēma-bibasa māmṡgata mahēsa sōṁ, dēkhata hī rahiyē nita ē, rī.

kai ē sadā basahu inha nayanānhi, kai ē nayana jāhu jita ē, rī.. 2..
 kō'u samujhā'i kahai kina bhūpahi, baṛē bhāga ā'ē ita ē, rī.
 kulisa-kaṭhōra kahām̐ saṅkara-dhanu, mṛdumūraṭi kisōra kita ē, rī.. 3..
 biracata inhahiṁ biran̄ci bhuvana saba sundaratā khōjata rita ē, rī.
 tulasidāsa tē dhan'ya janama jana, mana-krama-baca jinhakē hita ē, rī.. 4..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-6

Verse no. 1/78—[The lady continues to say—] 'Oh dear friend (rī)! Ever since they have seen Lord Sri Ram and Laxman, the men and women folk of Janakpur have become so dazed, mesmerized, spellbound and enchanted by their view that it seems that many 'Kalpas' (literally, a very long period of time) passed before they could even bat an eyelid¹ (1).

[¹This is a poetic way of saying that the citizens of Janakpur were extremely enchanted by the magnificently beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman so much so that they appeared to be completely dazed and absolutely stunned to the extent that their eyelids stopped their natural habit of blinking every now and then. Never had they in their lives seen such a wonderful sight of beauty and loveliness and comeliness.]

Oh dear friend (rī)! All the citizens, being overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection for the two princes, ask and plead with Lord Mahesh (Shiva) for the boon that they should be able to see them daily (dēkhata hī rahiye nita ē), or else they should permanently reside in their (citizen's) eyes (kai ē sadā basahu inha nayanānhi), or the eyes themselves should follow the direction in which they go (kai ē nayana jāhu jita ē)² (2).

[²The citizens began to sincerely love and have deep affection for Lord Sri Ram and Laxman so much that they wished to have them close by so that they, the citizens, would be able to see the two brothers, have access to them and be able to interact with them whenever they wished so. Hence, they pray to Lord Shiva, the patron God of the kingdom of Janakpur, that their wishes be fulfilled.]

Oh dear friend (rī)! Why doesn't someone (gather courage to) advise the king that it is a matter of great pride, a rare fortune and remarkably good luck that these two (Ram and Laxman) have come this way. [Hence, he should stop further procrastination and abandon his stubbornness. He should call-off his vows and immediately marry Sita to Sri Ram.]

[The problem is that—] Oh dear friend (rī)! On the one hand is the bow of Shiva which is harder, stronger and heavier than the 'Kulis' ('kulisa-kaṭhōra kahām̐ saṅkara-dhanu'; 'Vajra', the weapon of Indra, the king of gods; it is made of the hardest material in existence), and on the other hand is this most delicate, sweet and tender form (of Lord Ram; 'mṛdumūraṭi kisōra kita ē')³ (3).

[³A similar view is expressed in verse no. 1/70, stanza no. 3 herein above by the citizens of Janakpur.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 222, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 223 where the women-folk of Janakpur talk on this issue in the same way.

Sita's mother Sunayana, the queen-mother, also has the same thoughts: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256;

Sita herself thinks in the same way: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 258.

Every single soul wished that Lord Ram should marry Sita by breaking the bow of Shiva, but the problem was that this bow was exceptionally strong, sturdy and heavy. Lord Ram was of a delicate frame, and so the odds were apparently stacked highly against him. So would someone gather courage to advise king Janak to be reasonable as the stake of his daughter's future is on the block. He need not worry too much as he has the full and unquestioned support of his subjects should he decide to change his stance and cancel the bow-breaking ceremony, and instead pass a royal decree that he wishes to marry Sita to Lord Ram. No one in the kingdom would accuse him of any wrong doing.

On the other hand, allowing such a delicate frame as that of Lord Ram to go and pit himself against the hardness of the bow would be an utterly shameful act on the part of the king.

Doesn't the king realize that this opportunity won't come to him again. Does he not understand that leaving the fate of his daughter to uncertainty as is natural in cases where the marriage is dependent upon some competition where the winner gets to wed the girl, even if this winner is otherwise not at all suitable for her—is not only highly demeaning, irrational and unethical, but also exceptionally cruel for the girl to force her into a perilous situation that would rob of her peace and happiness for life. But, as the saying goes, it would be too late to save the crop once locust destroys it.]

Oh dear friend (rī)! At the time of creating the excellent form of the two brothers (biracata inhahim), the Creator had ferreted out the entire creation in his search for the quality of beauty, prettiness, comeliness, loveliness, magnificence, glamour and charm in order to find and gather something most suitable to create this image (birañci bhuvana saba sundaratā khōjata rita ē)⁴.

Oh dear friend (rī)! Tulsidas says that the birth and life of those persons are deemed to be lucky, fruitful and good-omened (tulasidāsa tē dhan'ya janama jana) who have sincere affection for Lord Ram and have determined that their good, welfare and well-being is in having devotion for and surrendering before the Lord sincerely with their mind and heart, in their actions and deeds, and in their speech and words (mana-krama-baca jinhakē hita ē) (4).

[⁴Refer also to verse no. 1/77, stanza no. 1 herein above.

The result was that the Creator took or extracted the best of these stellar qualities out from his own creation and moulded the two forms of Lord Ram and Laxman, but in the process the world was shorn of all its beauty, it was laid bare from charm and attractiveness. In other words, the two brothers are unparalleled in their charm and comeliness, being so bewitchingly beautiful and pretty to behold that everything else called 'beautiful and charming' fade when compared to them.

The excellent qualities of beauty, loveliness, prettiness, charm, magnificence, glamour etc. were concentrated in one place in the image of Lord Ram and Laxman.]

(1 / 79)

सुनु, सखि! भूपति भलोई कियो, री।
 जेहि प्रसाद अवधेस—कुँवर दोउ नगर—लोग अवलोकि जियो, री॥ 1॥
 मानि प्रतीति कहे मेरे तैं कत सँदेह—बस करति हियो, री।
 तौलौं है यह संभु सरासन, श्रीरघुबर जौलौं न लियो, री॥ 2॥
 जेहि बिरंचि रचि सीय सँवारी, औ रामहि ऐसो रूप दियो, री।
 तुलसिदास तेहि चतुर बिधाता निजकर यह संजोग सियो, री॥ 3॥

(1/79)

sunu, sakhi! bhūpati bhalōī kiyō, rī.
 jēhi prasāda avadhēsa-kumvara dō'u nagara-lōga avalōki jiyō, rī.. 1..
 māni pratīti kahē mērē tair̥ kata samdēha-basa karati hiyō, rī.
 taulaur̥ hai yaha sambhu sarāsana, śrīraghubara jaulaur̥ na liyō, rī.. 2..
 jēhi biran̄ci raci sīya samvārī, au rāmahi aisō rūpa diyō, rī.
 tulasidāsa tēhi catura bidhātā nijakara yaha sanjōga siyō, rī.. 3..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-7

Verse no. 1/79—[The companion to whom the lady, who was enchanted by the magnificent beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman, had been talking to in verse nos. 1/76—1/78, now replies to her mate as follows:--]

‘Oh dear friend (rī)! Listen, king Janak has done a very good thing (as he has created a favourable circumstance for all of us).

See, it is due to him that the citizens have been able to see to their heart’s content (‘nagara-lōga avalōki jiyō’) these two wonderful princess of the king of Avadh (i.e. king Dasrath)¹ (1).

[¹The credit of enabling the citizens of Janakpur to get a chance of seeing and interacting with Lord Ram and Laxman goes to king Janak because it was he who had organised the bow ceremony and had invited sage Vishwamitra to attend it, which gave the sage an opportunity to bring the two princes here.

Otherwise, the residents of Janakpur had no or little chance of ever seeing the two brothers, Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman, in their lives. So they are profusely

thanking Janak for making it possible for them, for enabling them to get the reward of having eyes and feeling fulfilled.]

Oh dear friend (rī)! Believe in what I say; why do you unnecessarily put yourself in a dilemma and let your mind be torn in doubts that rob you of your peace and happiness?

Verily I say, oh dear friend (rī), that this bow of Lord Shiva looks what it seemeth to look (tough, hard, strong, heavy, unyielding and unbreakable), only till the time Lord Ram does not take it (i.e. decide to go to the bow and pick it up)² (2).'

[²The bow looks so tough and difficult to tackle due to its formidable reputation as being the 'invincible bow of Lord Shiva'. But believe me when I say in all sooth that as soon as Lord Ram walks upto it and touches it in preparation to pick it up and hold it in his hands, the bow would yield and surrender itself to the Lord. After all, it is the bow of Shiva, and Shiva is a gracious and compassionate Lord God to whom all of us as have been earnestly praying to make things happen in such a way that Lord Ram marries Sita, and this prayer obviously presumes that the bow would be broken by the Lord.

Lord Shiva is sure to hear and answer our prayers because it is the combined desire of all the citizens of Janakpur who have all along in their lives been praying and serving Shiva most sincerely, and now they have asked the Lord to reward them for all the good and meritorious deeds done by them throughout their lives. {Refer: verse nos. 1/70, stanza nos. 4-5; 1/78, stanza no. 2 herein above; and verse no. 1/80 herein below which clearly reiterates this viewpoint.}

This wise friend assures the one who had doubts about whether Lord Ram would be able to break the bow or not by citing the fact that though the Lord looks so delicate in frame and young in age but he has a lot of stupendous powers of mystical nature, exceptional valour and grit that are not so apparent but are nevertheless a matter of fact as proved by his slaying of demonsess Tadka as well as the full army of fierce demons led by Subahu and Marich while the Lord was protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Not only this, he had also liberated Ahilya from her ancient curse which had turned her into a stone by touching her with the tip of his toe that transformed Ahilya into her original form as the chaste wife of sage Gautam, after which she went back to heaven to be reunited with her husband. Besides this, sage Vishwamitra had taught the Lord all about the science and skills of handling a bow, and so the Lord knows all the tricks needed to tackle any kind of bow.

{Refer: verse no. 1/74, stanza nos. 2-3 herein above.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 223.}

These acts of Lord Ram and facts related to him are known to all—so where is the doubt left that Lord Ram would not be able tackle this old and worn-out bow?]

Tulsidas says that this friend was very confident that Lord Ram would break the bow and marry Sita.

He quotes her: 'Oh dear friend (rī)! The Creator, who has so carefully created Sita (and bequeathed her with beauty and charm of matchless proportions) and who has endowed Lord Sri Ram with such a stupendous beauty and exceptional charm (that matches that of Sita)—verily it is the same Creator who has devised this device of bringing them together by creating a favourable combination of circumstances to bring

them face to face here (on the pretext of the bow ceremony). So, why do you worry?’³ (3).

[³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 223 which says exactly the same thing.

The friend emphasised that the Creator had planned everything in advance, and there are certain hints in life that are too obvious to be missed and noticed. The Creator has created a perfect ‘couple’ in the form of the prince and the princess (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita respectively). Now, the Creator has to follow the rules and norms of creation that he himself has decreed—and ‘tis to give the partners separate births and then bring them together by the bond known as marriage. It is pre-destined and ‘tis bound to happen.

Taking an example from Nature we can see that a rose tree will always bear a rose flower and not anything else. It is never that a tree destined to bear a beautiful flower such as the rose would suddenly bear a dry cactus on one of its branches, and neither will a cactus bear a rose.]

(1 / 80)

अनुकूल नृपहि सूलपानि हैं।
नीलकंठ कारुण्यसिंधु हर दीनबन्धु दिनदानि हैं॥ 1॥
जो पहिले ही पिनाक जनक कहँ गये साँपि जिय जानि हैं।
बहुरि त्रिलोचन लोचनके फल सबहि सुलभ किये आनि हैं॥ 2॥
सुनियत भव-भाव ते राम हैं, सिय भावती-भवानि हैं।
परखत प्रीति-प्रतीति, पयज-पनु रहे काज ठटु ठानि हैं॥ 3॥
भये बिलोकि बिदेह नेहबस बालक बिनु पहिचानि हैं।
होत हरे होने बिरवनि दल सुमति कहति अनुमानि हैं॥ 4॥
देखियत भूप भोर-के-से उडुगन, गरत गरीब गलानि हैं।
तेज-प्रताप बढ़त कुँवरनको, जदपि सँकोची बानि हैं॥ 5॥
बय किसोर, बरजोर, बाहुबल-मेरु मेलि गुन तानि हैं।
अवसि राम राजीव-बिलोचन संभु-सरसन भानि हैं॥ 6॥
देखिहैं ब्याह-उछाह नारि-नर, सकल सुमंगल-खानि हैं।
भूरिभाग तुलसी तेऊ, जे सुनिहैं, गाइहैं, बखानिहैं॥ 7॥

(1/80)

anukūla nṛpahi sūlapāni haiṁ.

nīlakaṇṭha kārun'yasindhu hara dīnabandhu dinadāni haiṁ.. 1..

jō pahilē hī pināka janaka kaham' gayē saumpi jiya jāni haiṁ.

bahuri trilōcana lōcanakē phala sabahi sulabha kiyē āni haiṁ.. 2..

suniyata bhava-bhāva tē rāma haiṁ, siya bhāvatī-bhavāni haiṁ.

parakhata prīti-pratīti, payaja-panu rahē kāja ṭhaṭu ṭhāni haiṁ.. 3..

bhayē bilōki bidēha nēhabasa bālaka binu pahicāni haiṁ.

hōta harē hōnē biravani dala sumati kahati anumāni haiṁ.. 4..

dēkhiyata bhūpa bhōra-kē-sē uḍugana, garata garība galāni haiṁ.

tēja-pratāpa baṛhata kuṁṁvaranakō, jadapi samkōcī bāni haiṁ.. 5..
 baya kisōra, barajōra, bāhubala-mēru mēli guna tānihaiṁ.
 avasi rāma rājīva-bilōcana sambhu-sarāsana bhānihaiṁ.. 6..
 dēkhihaiṁ byāha-uchāha nāri-nara, sakala sumaṅgala-khāni haiṁ.
 bhūribhāga tulasī tē'ū, jē sunihaiṁ, gā'ihaiṁ, bakhānihaiṁ.. 7..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-8

Verse no. 1/80—‘Sūlapāni¹ (Lord Shiva) is favourable towards Janak. That blue-throated Lord Har² (nīlakaṇṭha hara), who is an ocean of mercy and compassion (kārun'yasindhu), is a friend of the distressed, the lowly, the humble, the resourceless and the meek (dīnabandhu), and is a most generous, liberal and magnanimous donor who never ties of giving all the time of the day (dīnadāni) (1).

[¹Lord Shiva holds a ‘trident’, which is called a ‘Trishul’, in his hands. Hence, this name. “Sul” = the sharp-pointed trident; “Paani” = held in the hand.

²‘Har’ is one of the many names of Lord Shiva. Literally this word means to steal or remove or eliminate. It alludes to the ability of Lord Shiva to remove all the spiritual sufferings of his devotees, and provide their souls with liberation and deliverance, thereby eliminating their fears of the cycle of birth and death and its incumbent miseries and pains.

Lord Shiva is called ‘Neelkantha’ because of the blue tinge of his throat. The throat became ‘blue’ when the Lord had drunk the poison known as ‘Halaahal’ that was produced in some by-gone era when the ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of ‘Amrit’, the elixir of eternity. If this poison fell on the ground, the entire creation would have been scorched. So in order to prevent this from happening, the ‘merciful and compassionate Lord Shiva’ had gulped it. But even as he did it, he knew that if this poison entered his stomach it would burn everything inside, and being the Supreme God of creation it would mean that the whole creation that has its habitat in the Lord’s abdomen would be scorched to death too. So, Shiva kept this poison in his throat, rendering its skin blue or pink coloured.]

Verily, he (Shiva) had known everything in his heart beforehand (being a ‘Mahadeva’, the Greatest of Gods, and all-knowing). It is because of this knowledge that he had given the bow to Janak³.

The same Lord known as ‘trilōcana’ (i.e. the Lord with ‘three-eyes’)⁴, has now brought these two princes here among our midst to make it possible for us to have the fruits (rewards, benefits) of our eyes⁵ (2).

[³Lord Shiva knew in advance that one day Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, would be united with Sita who was a personified form of the Lord’s divine consort known as goddess Laxmi. It was to be a symbolic physical union between, or bringing together of, two supreme powers of creation—one known as ‘Brahm’ and the other known as ‘Shakti’, which are neutral when independent but assume stupendous powers of phenomenal dimensions and magnitude when brought together—so that the work of the Gods can be done. This ‘work’ was the elimination of the cruel demons who

have been tyrannizing the world and tormenting all its creatures. Demons were a formidable force, and to neutralize them a force superior to them was the need of the hour. And this force can be summoned only when 'Brahm' and his 'Shakti' unite.

A simple example from the daily life would illustrate this phenomenon. Everyone knows that a power-battery can produce powerful 'electricity', but to make the battery's hidden power to produce electricity become practically usable it is necessary to bring the negative and the positive poles of the battery together through a wire that completes the circuit.

After all, it was Shiva who had advised the Gods to pray to Vishnu to do something to eliminate the horrors of the demons, and therefore it was now incumbent upon Shiva to aid the process and do everything in his might to bring it to fruition. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 185.

⁴Lord Shiva has 'three eyes': two conventional eyes, and the third eye is located in the center of his forehead and stands for wisdom. This eye is like the 'sun' and harbours the fire element just like the sun. It is called the 'eye of wisdom' because the darkness of delusions and ignorance is removed, or rather 'burnt', when Lord Shiva looks at the delusion-ridden world with this eye. In Upanishads it is said that the ascetic should concentrate his attention here during meditation as it helps him to fully realize his spiritual potentials and literally separate the grain ('Absolute Truth') from the chaff ('the falsehoods').

⁵Now, if the objective was merely to bring about a union between Brahm represented by Lord Ram and Shakti represented by Sita, then Shiva had thousands of options open for him. He could have done it in any other way. Even if it is supposed that the 'bow' was to play the central role in this union, Shiva could have placed it with some other great king instead of Janak, as he has actually done. Hence, the hint is clear: Lord Shiva was so pleased with the citizens of Janakpur that the Lord decided to reward them for their good life and righteous living by putting the bow in the custody of Janak's family so that in due course of time when Lord Ram comes here to get united with Sita, the citizens would be duly rewarded and given the joy of their lives.

So in other words, this lady friend assures her companion that if the all-knowing and compassionate Great God Lord Shiva himself is playing a pivotal role as a match-maker between Lord Sri Ram and Sita, and since he has been instrumental in granting the citizens of Janakpur the privilege of having a divine sight of Lord Ram by devising things in such a way that the latter visits Janakpur, it is sure and soothfast that Lord Ram would certainly break the bow and marry Sita, and there is no iota of doubt about it.]

It is heard that Lord Sri Ram is dear to Lord Shiva (*suniyata bhava-bhāva tē rāma hairṁ*), while Sita is liked by Bhavani, or goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva (*siya bhāvatī-bhavāni hairṁ*)⁶.

At this moment they (Shiva-Parvati) are merely examining the sincerity, depth, intensity, soothfastness and persevearance of the love and affection between Sri Ram and Sita (*parakhata prīti-pratīti*), as well as the determination and ability of Janak to stand fast in keeping his vows (*payaja-panu rahē*). This is the only and the most logical reason why he (Shiva) is so delaying the final outcome inspite of making all arrangements (*kāja ṭhaṭu ṭhāni hairṁ*)⁷ (3).

[⁶Lord Shiva's devotion, faith and affection for Lord Ram is elaborately detailed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. There are a number of instances, for example: (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

Goddess Parvati's liking for Sita is clear when the former blesses the latter when she had gone to the royal garden to pray. Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/72; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 236.

⁷And what is that 'outcome' and what is the 'delay'? The 'outcome' is the actual breaking of the bow and the declaration that Lord Ram and Sita are united.

And the 'delay' is the long time taken while all the competing kings and princes were allowed to try their hands at breaking the bow, individually and collectively, and when all of them failed miserably king Janak had regretted about his vows and had wailed and lamented about his distress, and then sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to go and break the bow, and the moment the Lord actually lifted the bow and broke it. All these developments must have taken a couple of hours, and these hours left the citizens on tenterhooks and most nervous, as if they were being kept in boiling water all the while.]

King Janak has been overcome by affection towards these boys even before he came to know who they were⁸.

I can only guess that some auspicious tidings are forewarned for us as hinted by this single development, for it is said by the sayer that "a tree that sporteth green leaves wouldest also beareth succulent fruits when the time cometh"⁹ (4).

[⁸This is clearly stated in (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/61, stanza nos. 3-4; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

⁹The fact that king Janak who is renowned as a very dispassionate person is so charmed by these two princes, Ram and Laxman, even before he was formally introduced to the brothers by sage Vishwamitra indicates that some subtle and invisible relationship exists between the two sides, king Janak on the one side and the two brothers on the other side, like it is said by the sayer that "blood attracts blood; blood hideth not from blood; and blood is thicker than water".

If a fruit-tree is rich with a cover of green leaves it means it will grow fruits. Otherwise, if the tree was dead or dry and barren, it would not sprout leaves as well. Therefore, by seeing green leaves on a fruit-tree which is young now one can correctly predict that when the tree grows up and the time comes it will bear fruits also.

So the friend said that as the things stand now and detailed in the above observations, all indications are that Lord Ram would surely and certainly break the bow and marry Sita.

Remember, the women-folk of Janakpur have already made this guess that the two brothers have come here at the invitation of king Janak in verse no. 1/74, stanza no. 3, and no. 1/77, stanza no. 3 earlier.]

Though these boys look simple in their behaviour, and are most modest and hesitant in their speech and demeanours (as they speak very softly, politely and almost inaudibly; ‘jadapi samṅkōcī bāni haiṁ’)¹⁰.

Verily I say in sooth that the rest of the kings and princes who have come to take part in this competition have become like the stars seen in the sky at dawn when they lose their shine once the sun makes its appearance (bhūpa bhōra-kē-sē uḍugana). Indeed, all of them look depressed, dejected, shameful, downcast and gloomy like these stars (garata garība galāni haiṁ) when they have seen the two princes in their midst because of the shine and radiance effusing out of the latter that point to their inherent dynamism, energy, prowess, valour, strength, majesty, authority and grandness (tēja-pratāpa barhata kumṅvaranakō)¹¹ (5).

[¹⁰Refer: Verse no. 1/73, stanza no. 6 herein above.

In other words, whereas the other kings and princes are full of false pride and vanity, trying to show-off themselves and outdo each other in their pretention of grandeur and majesty, these two boys are simple and down-to-earth, without a trace of haughtiness and ego. They don’t have any kind of ‘airs’ about them. The other kings are talking loudly and creating a ruckus, these two boys even talk with each others in hushed tones.

¹¹In this stanza, the two princes, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, are compared to the ‘sun at dawn time’ in the sky, while all the other kings and princes who have gathered for the bow-breaking ceremony to the ‘stars in the morning sky at dawn’.

In spite of their simplicity and humility and modesty, the two princes are remarkable and they stand out in the crowd of haughty and pompous kings and princes full of vanity who try to outwit others in their show of majesty and grandeur just like the ‘sun’ in the sky that outshines ‘all the stars taken together’.

As soon as the sun rises, the countless stars, that may have been the jewel of the night, instantly become lack-lustre, and as the sun continues to progress in the sky all these stars completely vanish from sight under the splendour of the sun. These hoards of haughty and proud kings and princes are like the stars that fade away and finally go into oblivion with the arrival of the sun which is represented by Lord Ram here.

The kings had become increasingly gloomy because they were certain that they didn’t stand a chance against Sri Ram, while Sri Ram appeared all the more confident and certain that he would break the bow. This confidence was shining on his face, while the gloom and despair that had overcome the kings had darkened their faces in shame and dejection. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 245; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251.]

Though he (Lord Ram) is only in his teens (is very young; ‘baya kisōra’), but still I am certain that he would clasp it (the bow) in the clamp of his immensely strong arms and crumple it with his hands when he would pull or stretch it (i.e. Lord would string and break the bow) (bāhubala-mēru mēli guna tānihaiṁ).

In all sooth we say that it is our view that it is certain that the lotus-eyed Lord Sri Ram (avasi rāma rājīva-bilōcana) would break this bow of Shiva (sambhu-sarāsana bhānihaiṁ) (6).

And as a result of this marvelous feat, all the men and women folk (of Janakpur) haply would see the Lord's marriage ceremony which is like a treasury of all auspiciousness, joy, happiness, gladness and good tidings for one and all (*sakala sumaṅgala-khāni*).'

Tulsidas asserts that all those who would hear, sing and narrate this story (*sunihairiṁ, gā'ihairiṁ, bakhānihairiṁ*) in times to come would also be regarded to be as fortunate and lucky as these citizens of Janakpur were (*bhūribhāga tulasī tē'ū*) (7).

राग केदारा

(1 / 81)

रामहि नीके कै निरखि, सुनैनी!
 मनसहुँ अगम समुझि, यह अवसरु कत सकुचति, पिकबैनी॥ 1॥
 बड़े भाग मख-भूमि प्रगट भई सीय सुमंगल-ऐनी।
 जा कारन लोचन-गोचर भइ मूरति सब सुखदैनी॥ 2॥
 कुलगुर-तियके मधुर बचन सुनि जनक-जुबति मति-पैनी।
 तुलसी सिथिल देह-सुधि-बुधि करि सहज सनेह-बिषैनी॥ 3॥

rāga kēdārā

(1/81)

rāmahi nīkē kai nirakhi, sunainī!
 manasahum' agama samujhi, yaha avasaru kata sakucati, pikabainī.. 1..
 baṛē bhāga makha-bhūmi pragaṭa bha'ī siya sumaṅgala-ainī.
 jā kārana lōcana-gōcara bha'i mūrati saba sukhadainī.. 2..
 kulagura-tiyakē madhura bacana suni janaka-jubati mati-painī.
 tulasī sithila dēha-sudhi-budhi kari sahaja sanēha-biṣainī.. 3..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-9

[The Dialogue Between Wife of Shatanand and Sita's Mother]

Verse no. 1/81—[The wife of Janak's Guru Shatanand speaks to Sita's mother Sunaina, also known as 'Sunayani/Sunaini', the one with beautiful eyes—]

'Oh Sunaini! Have a good look at Lord Sri Ram (nirakhi). Oh the one who speaks sweetly (pikabainī)! You must understand that he is beyond the reach and comprehension of the 'Mana' (mind) (manasahum' agama). Say, why do you hesitate at this (opportune and golden) moment (to look closely at him who is a personified form of Supreme Lord who is beyond the mind to access and understand)¹? (1).

[¹Shatanand was the learned and wise court priest of the kingdom of Janakpur and the preceptor of king Janak just like sage Vasistha was for king Dasrath of Ayodhya. Shatanand's wife too was wise and knowledgeable as her husband just like Vasistha's wife Arundhati was. She knew the secret of who Lord Sri Ram actually was—which was that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world. The Lord is almighty and an invisible Supreme Being who is inaccessible even to the wise ones such as ascetics and great sages who spend an entire lifetime meditating and contemplating but still can't access the Lord and understand his true nature. Even the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas have failed to fully comprehend the Lord and have surrendered finally to say that he is 'neti-neti', i.e. not this, not this. In other words, in whatever the scriptures try to describe who the Lord is they find that this description is incomplete, and hence say that whatever they have said with respect to the Lord is not all, there is much beyond it. "The Lord is not all this what the scriptures say, and neither is he what they don't say; for he is 'this' as well as 'that', and he is not limited to 'this' nor 'that, for truly he is his beyond everything said!"

In essence, sage Shatanand's wise wife advises Sunayana, the mother of Sita and the queen of king Janak, that she should feel herself as being very blessed and extremely lucky that the Supreme Being, who even the great ascetics and sages find difficult to perceive and understand even after adopting such powerful tools as meditation and contemplation, is now so easily available to allow her to have her eye's fill of the divine view of the Lord.

So why is she not utilizing this rarest of rare of golden opportunities and foolishly frittering it away by wasting time looking here and there at the other kings and princes who have assembled there in the hope that they would break the bow and marry Sita, trying to weigh and judge them in her mind and ponder about their suitability or otherwise as a prospective groom for her daughter? How foolish it is of her to even harbour such thoughts as someone else marrying Sita when Lord Ram is in their midst? Shatanand's wife clarifies further as follows—]

It is our great good fortune and the best of luck that we can ever think or hope for that Sita—who herself personifies all auspiciousness, well-beings and happiness (*siya sumaṅgala-ainī*)—has revealed herself from the ground where the fire sacrifice (known as 'Makha') was organized (by king Janak) (*baṛē bhāga makha-bhūmi pragaṭa bha'i*)².

And it is because of her that another good fortune and best of luck has presented itself before us in the form of this 'Makha' where the bow would be sacrificed, because it is by this excuse that we have had an opportunity to see (*jā kārana lōcana-gōcara bha'i*) this wonderful and divine image (or the 'form' of the Supreme Being in the person of Lord Ram) that is a bestower of all sorts of joy and happiness to the beholder (*mūraṭi saba sukhadainī*)³

{Put simply, this stanza means that it is because of Sita, who is an embodiment of auspiciousness, that Sri Ram and Laxman have come here. And this has given us the opportunity to see such a pair of beautiful princes which otherwise would not have been possible for us. So we must use this rare moment wisely.} (2).

[²Sita was found by king Janak in a pitcher buried underground while he was ploughing the field in preparation for a fire sacrifice. At that time, Shatanand had advised

Janak to take her and bring her up as his own daughter, and treat her as a blessing or fruit or reward of the sacrifice that he planned to do. In times to come, this infant girl would prove to be the cause of his attaining immense joy and happiness as well as a privilege that no other living being has yet had nor will ever have. This story is narrated in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-66.

³A religious ceremony where any 'sacrifice' is done is called a 'makha'. Since the ceremony to marry Sita was organized around the 'breaking of a bow' it is also equivalent to 'makha'—because here a bow is being sacrificed. The marriage of a girl to a suitable boy is regarded as a great religious duty for the parent, and its importance is so great that it is equivalent to performing of a religious sacrifice.

Now, we come to a very interesting conclusion here—the answer to the perennial and vexing question 'why was Shiva's bow broken' is found here. The answer is this: the bow was technically 'sacrificed' (and not 'broken') as part of the 'makha' or religious sacrifice that Janak had organized to marry his daughter Sita. During such sacrifices one offers something very dear to him and something on which his entire reputation hinges as the best offering on his part. This bow was not an ordinary bow, but a mighty bow of the almighty Lord Shiva that had no match in the world and which occupied a place of pride in the household of king Janak. It was very dear to him. So sacrificing this bow was the best offer Janak could make in the religious ceremony held to marry Sita.

Janak is so blessed and lucky that when he did the first sacrifice he was blessed with arrival of Sita, an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, in his household, and now when he is doing the second sacrifice he is blessed with the arrival of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. In fact, Janak was told by sage Narad all about this at the time of king Janak finding Sita in the ground, and it was precisely due to this that he had organized the bow breaking ceremony. This aspect is very explicitly narrated in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 67-75.

The description of Lord Shiva's bow and how it came to be in the custody of Janak is narrated in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 21-22, and 69-70.]

Tulsidas says that on hearing these sweet and enlightening words of the wife of the family's Guru ('kulagura-tiya'; sage Shatanand's wife), the most wise and sharp witted wife of Janak ('janaka-jubati mati-paini'; i.e. Sunaini) lost all awareness of her body and surroundings (i.e. she became thrilled and overwhelmed with emotions upon learning who Lord Ram actually was).

Thence, she began to look at Lord Sri Ram with a sense of natural affection (that one has for the Supreme Lord and the revered deity whom he or she worships)⁴ (3).

[⁴Prior to the advise given by her Guru's wife, Sunayana viewed Lord Ram as one of the many competing princes who were vying with each other for Sita's hand in marriage. But when she learnt the significance of Lord Ram coming here and who he actually was, her perception changed and she was thrilled to realize that she and the rest of the members of her family were exceptionally lucky that they have both Sita and Ram in their midst as personified forms of Goddess Laxmi and Lord Vishnu, which was a rarest of rare chance.]

मिलो बरु सुंदर सुंदरि सीतहि लायकु
 साँवरो सुभग, शोभाहूँको परम सिंगारु ।
 मनहूँको मन मोहै, उपमाको को है?
 सोहै सुखमासागर संग अनुज राजकुमारु ॥ 1 ॥
 ललित सकल अंग, तनु धरे कै अनंग,
 नैननिको फल कैँधौं, सियको सुकृत-सारु ।
 सरद-सुधा-सदन-छबिहि निंदै बदन,
 अरुन आयत नवनलिन-लोचन चारु ॥ 2 ॥
 जनक-मनकी रीति जानि बिरहित प्रीति,
 ऐसी औ मूरति देखे रह्यो पहिलो बिचारु ।
 तुलसी नृपहि ऐसो कहि न बुझावै कोउ,
 'पन औ कुँअर दोऊ प्रेमकी तुला धौं तारु' ॥ 3 ॥

(1/82)

milō baru sur̥ndara sundari sītahi lāyaku
 sām̐varō subhaga, śōbhāhūm̐kō parama siṅgāru.
 manahūkō mana mōhai, upamākō kō hai?
 sōhai sukhamaśāgara saṅga anuja rājakumāru.. 1..
 lalita sakala aṅga, tanu dharē kai anaṅga,
 nainanikō phala kaindhaur̐, siyakō sukr̥ṭa-sāru.
 sarada-sudhā-sadana-chabihi nindai badana,
 aruna āyata navanalina-lōcana cāru.. 2..
 janaka-manakī rīti jāni birahita prīti,
 aisī au mūrati dēkhē rahyō pahilō bicāru.
 tulasī nr̥pahi aisō kahi na bujhāvai kō'u,
 'pana au kum̐ara dō'ū prēmakī tulā dhaur̐ tāru'.. 3..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-10

[The talk of the enchanted women-folk of Janakpur]

Verse no. 1/82—[After a brief interlude of verse no. 1/81, this verse picks up the thread of talk from verse no. 1/80 that narrates the views of the enchanted women-folk of Janakpur who had gathered at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony.

These enchanted ladies of Janakpur tell each other with respect to the charm and beauty of Lord Ram as follows—]

‘Oh Friend! This most lovely, dark complexioned groom (baru sur̥ndara; sām̐varō subhaga), who is like the crown-jewel and a decoration for the qualities of beauty, charm, magnificence, glamour, prettiness etc. themselves (śōbhāhūm̐kō parama

siṅgāru), is indeed the one who has been found (milō) to be most suitable for Sita who is equally beautiful and charming (sundari sītahi lāyaku).

He (Lord Ram) is so enchanting that he keeps the Mana (mind and heart) enthralled and captivated (manahūkō mana mōhai). Say, is there anything or being with which or with whom he can be compared? (upamākō kō hai). [That is, he is so unique and rare in beauty and charm that no one and nothing is there in this world with whom or which one can compare him.]

This prince (i.e. Lord Ram) is accompanied by his younger brother (saṅga anuja rājakumāru), and this adds to the charm and glamour as if two great oceans that grant joy and happiness are together (sōhai sukhamāsāgara saṅga) (1).

His (Sri Ram's) entire body is most charming and handsome (lalita sakala aṅga). Say, is he not Kamdeo/cupid himself personified (tanu dharē kai anaṅga)?

Or is he not the reward one expects from having eyes (nainanikō phala kaindhaurṁ), and is he not a personified form of all the meritorious and good deeds done by Sita in her life (siyakō sukrṭa-sāru)?

His (Lord Ram's) form is so bewitching in its charm and attractiveness that it puts to shame the moon when it looks its best on the first full moon's night of winter when it shines with a brilliant sheen as the heavenly pitcher that stores the nectar of bliss known as Sudha (sarada-sudhā-sadana-chabihi nindai badana).

His red-tinged and large eyes (aruna āyata lōcana) are as beautiful as the fresh petals of the newly opened lotus flower (navanalina cāru) (2).

Verily I say that even after seeing such a mind-captivating and heart-enchanting sight of this image (or form of Lord Ram; 'aisī au mūrati dēkhē') if Janak's mind is still so stubborn that it is hooked to his old vow ('rahyō pahilō bicāru'—that necessitates the breaking of the bow as a condition for someone marrying Sita), then certainly and in all sooth he and his mind are so stern and dry that they are truly devoid of any sense of affection and love (which need a soft heart and a mind that has some emotion in it; 'janaka-manakī rīti jāni birahita prīti')!

[Now, Tulsidas intervenes and exhorts all those present on the occasion that someone should gather courage to tell Janak that he must abandon his stubbornness, and marry Sita to Lord Ram without any reservations or second thoughts.]

Tulsidas wonders why no one advises Janak and tells him (tulasī nrpahi aisō kahi na bujhāvai kō'u) to put his (ridiculous) vows on one side of the scale, and these two princes (Sri Ram and Laxman) on the other side of the scale that is symbolised by the glorious virtues of natural love, affection, endearments, sentiments and emotions combined, and then to weigh them to see how the scale tips in favour of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman ('pana au kumāra dō'ū prēmakī tulā dhaurṁ tāru')¹ (3).

[¹In other words, why is Janak being so old-fashioned and stubborn in his thoughts that he continues to stick to his outdated and ridiculous vow of hinging the entire future of his daughter on the condition of the breaking of a bow? Does he not realise what would happen if an ugly person or someone much older in age than Sita or someone who is cruel and inconsiderate manages to break the bow by which he would be

entitled to marry Sita? Would that not put Janak to shame and eternal grief? Forget about Janak; what would happen to Sita and her future happiness?

After all, the main purpose of holding this bow-breaking ceremony was to find someone suitable for Sita, someone who is exceptionally strong and capable and competent to look after her well-being, happiness and security in future once she goes away from the sanctuary of her father. Besides this, has Janak consulted Sita to seek her personal views; after all, it is she whose life is on the block and she therefore has full right to have her say in it.

Even if one neglects all these factors, how can one overlook the fact that Janak himself had been very impressed by the two brothers, and he has also become aware of their noble birth and high pedigree as being princes of a highly respected kingdom of Ayodhya, and of their stupendous feats and valour in defeating and eliminating the ferocious demons on the one hand and providing liberation to Ahilya on the other hand. In spite of this if Janak still sticks to his old ways and vows, then what can one say except to lament at his stubbornness of mind and sternness of heart that are dry as a desert and devoid of emotions and love.]

(1 / 83)

देखि देखि री! दोउ राजसुवन ।
 गौर स्याम सलोने लोने लोने, लोयननि,
 जिन्हकी सोभा तें सोहै सकल भुवन ॥ 1 ॥
 इन्हहीं ताडका मारी, मग मुनि—तिय तारी,
 ऋषिमख राख्यो, रन दले हैं दुवन ।
 तुलसी प्रभुको अब जनकनगर—नभ,
 सुजस—बिमल—बिधु चहत उवन ॥ 2 ॥

(1/83)

dēkhi dēkhi rī! dō'u rājasuvana.
 gaura syāma salōnē lōnē lōnē, lōyanani,
 jinhakī sōbhā tēm sōhai sakala bhuvana.. 1..
 inhahīm tāḍakā mārī, maga muni-tiya tārī,
 ṛṣimakha rākhyō, rana dalē hairṁ duvana.
 tulasī prabhukō aba janakanagara-nabha,
 sujasa-bimala-bidhu cahata uvana.. 2..

Lord Ram at the Arena of the Bow-breaking Ceremony-11

Verse no. 1/83—‘Oh Friend! Just have a look at these two princes.

Look, their dark and fair complexioned bodies¹ are very charming, as are their eyes which are extremely enchanting. All the Bhuvans (literally, all the corners of the world) look wonderful and glorious by the virtue of their presence there² (1).

[¹Lord Ram is dark complexioned, and Laxman is of a fair complexion.

²It simply means that wherever the two brothers go, that direction or place acquires special glory and magnificence and importance. From a different perspective it also means that since Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is also known as the 'Viraat Purush', the all-pervading and omnipresent Supreme Lord of creation, and Laxman is a reflection of the Lord's authority, it follows that whatever good and beautiful that is in the whole creation is nothing else but a form and reflection of the two brothers.]

These princes are the ones who have slayed Tadka and have liberated the sage's wife (Ahilya) on the way. They are the ones who have also protected the fire sacrifice of the sage (Vishwamitra) and have crushed (killed) Subahu and other wicked ones, the demons, in the battle-field³.

Tulsidas avers that soon the moon-like glory and fame of Lord Sri Ram would rise over (the sky of) Janakpur⁴ (2).

[³Refer: Verse no. 1/74, stanza no. 3 herein above.

⁴Why has Tulsidas compared the success of Lord Ram in breaking the bow to 'the rise of the moon' instead of the 'sun'? Well, it is because the moon is a symbol of beauty and charm, and is a provider of bliss and solace to those whose hearts are in agony. So, since Lord Ram is exceptionally charming and his success in breaking the bow would give immense happiness and joy to the citizens, the moon is an apt metaphor with respect to the Lord.]

राग टोड़ी

(1 / 84)

राजा रंगभूमि आज बैठे जाइ जाइकै ।
 आपने आपने थल, आपने आपने साज,
 आपनी आपनी बर बानिक बनाइकै ॥ 1 ॥
 कौसिक सहित राम-लषन ललित नाम,
 लरिका ललाम लोने पटए बुलाइकै ।
 दरसलालसा-बस लोग चले भाय भले,
 बिकसित-मुख निकसत धाइ धाइ कै ॥ 2 ॥
 सानुज सानंद हिये आगे है जनक लिये,
 रचना रुचिर सब सादर देखाइकै ।
 दिये दिव्य आसन सुपास सावकास अति,
 आछे आछे बीछे बीछे बिछौना बिछाइकै ॥ 3 ॥
 भूपतिकिसोर दुहुँ ओर, बीच मुनिराउ
 देखिबेको दाउँ, देखौ देखिबो बिहाइकै ।
 उदय-सैल सोहैं सुंदर कुँवर, जोहैं,

मानौ भानु भोर भूरि किरनि छिपाइकै ॥ 4 ॥
 कौतुक कोलाहल निसान—गान पुर, नभ
 बरषत सुमन बिमान रहे छाइकै ।
 हित—अनहित, रत—बिरत बिलोकि बाल,
 प्रेम—मोद—मगन जनम—फल पाइकै ॥ 5 ॥
 राजाकी रजाइ पाइ सचिव—सहेली धाइ,
 सतानंद ल्याए सिय सिबिका चढाइकै ।
 रूप—दीपिका निहारि मृग—मृगी नर—नारि,
 बिथके बिलोचन—निमेषे बिसराइकै ॥ 6 ॥
 हानि, लाहु, अनख, उछाहु, बाहुबल कहि
 बंदि बोले बिरद अकस उपजाइकै ।
 दीप दीपके महीप आए सुनि पैज पन,
 कीजै पुरुषार्थको अवसर भौ आइकै ॥ 7 ॥
 आनाकानी, कंठ—हँसी मुँहा—चाही होन लगी,
 देखि दसा कहत बिदेह बिलखाइकै ।
 घरनि सिधारिए, सुधारिए आगिलो काज,
 पूजि पूजि धनु कीजै बिजय बजाइकै ॥ 8 ॥
 जनक—बचन छुए बिरवा लजारु के से
 बीर रहे सकल सकुचि सिर नाइकै ।
 तुलसी लषन माषे, रोषे, राखे रामरुख
 भाषे मृदु परुष सुभायन रिसाइकै ॥ 9 ॥

rāga ṭōṛī

(1/84)

rājā raṅgabhūmi āja baiṭhē jā'i jā'ikai.
 āpanē āpanē thala, āpanē āpanē sāja,
 āpanī āpanī bara bānika banā'ikai.. 1..
 kausika sahita rāma-laṣana lalita nāma,
 larikā lalāma lōnē paṭha'e bulā'ikai.
 darasalālasā-basa lōga calē bhāya bhalē,
 bikasita-mukha nikasata dhā'i dhā'i kai.. 2..
 sānuja sānanda hiyē āgē hvai janaka liyē,
 racanā rucira saba sādara dēkhā'ikai.
 diyē dibya āsana supāsa sāvakāsa ati,
 āchē āchē bīchē bīchē bichaunā bichā'ikai.. 3..
 bhūpatikisōra duhum'ōra, bīca munirā'u
 dēkhibēkō dā'um', dēkhau dēkhibō bihā'ikai.
 udaya-saila sōhaiṁ sundara kum'vara, jōhaiṁ,
 mānau bhānu bhōra bhūri kirani chipā'ikai.. 4..
 kautuka kōlāhala nisāna-gāna pura, nabha
 baraṣata sumana bimāna rahē chā'ikai.

hita-anahita, rata-birata bilōki bāla,
 prēma-mōda-magana janama-phala pā'ikai.. 5..
 rājākī rajā'i pā'i saciva-sahēlī dhā'i,
 satānanda lyā'ē siya sibikā caṛhā'ikai.
 rūpa-dīpikā nihāri mrga-mrgī nara-nāri,
 bithakē bilōcana-nimēṣai bisarā'ikai.. 6..
 hāni, lāhu, anakha, uchāhu, bāhubala kahi
 bandi bōlē birada akasa upajā'ikai.
 dīpa dīpakē mahīpa ā'ē suni paija pana,
 kījai puruṣārathakō avasara bhau ā'ikai.. 7..
 ānākānī, kaṇṭha-hamṣī mumḥā-cāhī hōna lagī,
 dēkhi dasā kahata bidēha bilakhā'ikai.
 gharani sidhāri'ē, sudhāri'ē āgilō kāja,
 pūji pūji dhanu kījai bijaya bajā'ikai.. 8..
 janaka-bacana chu'ē biravā lajāru kē sē
 bīra rahē sakala sakuci sira nā'ikai.
 tulasī laṣana māṣē, rōṣē, rākhē rāmarukha
 bhāṣē mr̥du paruṣa subhāyana risā'ikai.. 9..

The Bow-Breaking Ceremony-1 (The Assembly Convenes and the Ceremony Starts)

Verse no. 1/84—[Now, the narration moves on to the spectacle at the arena where the bow breaking ceremony was to be held. The entire episode of the actual breaking of the bow and Sita garlanding Lord Ram with the victory garland is narrated from verse no. 1/84—1/98.

It is also described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 266.]

Today, all the kings have fully decked themselves marvellously in their regal splendour, complete with all the trappings of royalty and majesty that exhibit grandeur, pageantry and pomp. They have gone and seated themselves at places especially ear-marked for them in the arena (the venue) where the bow-breaking ceremony is to be held (1).

At this time, king Janak sent for the two charming boys whose names were Sri Ram and Laxman, to come at the venue along with their Guru Kaushik (Vishwamitra)¹. With a desire to have their Darshan (privileged viewing), the citizens got out of their homes and rushed towards the site with a cheerful mind and a thrilled body² (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 239 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 240.

Refer also to Verse no. 1/73 herein above of the present book Geetawali.]

Then, king Janak, accompanied by his younger brother Kushdhwaj, gladly came forward to heartily welcome them. He and his brother then respectfully escorted the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) and the sage (Vishwamitra) around the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony to show the entire arrangement to them.

After that, they took the guests and gave them their assigned seats which were superior to others in their majesty and beauty, in their outstanding fineness and charm, and incorporated every comfort and convenience that one can hope for inasmuch as they were especially erected for this purpose in regal style to seat special guests of honour who were invited to attend the ceremony³ (as these seats were provided with special upholstery, arm and foot rests, cushions, canopies, shades, provisions for refreshments such as cool drinking water etc.) (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 244 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8.]

[The citizens who had flocked the arena animatedly say to each other—] 'Ah, just have a look at this divine and wonderful sight which is a feast for the eye! The two princess (Ram and Laxman) are seated on either side, and the exalted sage (Vishwamitra) is in the centre.

This is one of the best opportunities or time we have to watch them closely and to our heart's content⁴. Hence, stop looking elsewhere and fix your sights on them.

These two beautiful, handsome and charming princes look as if the morning sun has silently risen over the 'Udaichal Mountain' while still hiding its thousands of rays⁵ (4).

[⁴'This' refers to the time when Lord Ram and Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra were comfortably seated. The first time the citizens had seen the two brothers was when they had gone for sight-seeing in the city when they were constantly on the move from one quarter of the city to another. The second opportunity was when the brothers had left the place where they had been lodged and were on their way to the venue of the bow ceremony. In both the cases the two brothers were constantly on the move, and so the enchanted citizens had to contend with a short time span when to view them. But now the situation was different as the brothers were seated at one place, and this place was on a platform and very prominent so everyone could fix their attention on them and gaze at them for as long as they wanted.

Now, an interesting thing must have occurred then. Those seats in the arena which afforded a front view of the thrones where the two brothers sat with the sage must have been overcrowded with jostling and pushing crowd as everyone would have wished to sit or stand in that part of the arena, leading to it almost bursting to its seams, while those seats at the rear must have been lying almost empty!

⁵The "udaya-saila" is literally the snow-covered lofty Mountain where the sun is first seen to rise from behind it far in the horizon. "udaya" means to rise, and "saila" means a mountain. When the sun rises from behind this mountain it is still in its nascent stage because the mountain is very high and the sun is deemed to be seen by someone who is standing on the summit from where he sees the sun while it is still at or just below the horizon. At this point of time the sun looks merely like an illuminated disc. Only

when it has gone up in the sky for some distance does it begin to exhibit its splendour and radiant glory which reaches its zenith when the sun is right overhead in the sky.

In our present stanza, this metaphor is employed to stress that till this point of time no one in the city has actually seen and witnessed the actual marvels enacted by Lord Ram nor of his stupendous powers, prowess, valour and strength-of-arm in practice. They have only heard about it just as one hears about the dazzling splendour of the sun. But nevertheless, it would be seen and witnessed shortly at the time when the Lord would actually go and break the formidable bow effortlessly just like the case when what is heard about the sun is actually seen and witnessed when the sun moves ahead in the sky and reaches the top of the sky at noon.

At present point of time, however, Lord Ram is sitting quietly and modestly, concealing his astounding potentials and powers just like the sun which has just peeped at the horizon to indicate that it has arrived. The raised platform is likened to the 'Udai Mountain', and Lord Ram to the nascent sun here.]

There is a lot of wonder and curiosity amongst the citizens of Janakpur. The whole city meanwhile is reverberating with the sound of musical instruments being played enthusiastically and felicitous songs being sung merrily.

The sky is filled with the vehicles of Gods who shower flowers on the arena below⁶.

Everyone, whether a friend or an enemy (i.e. those who liked the two princes and loved them, and even those who were jealous and harboured malice towards them), whether attached or dispassionate (i.e. that majority which was rooting in favour of the two brothers, and the miniscule minority who weren't bothered)—all of them watch enchanted at these two boys, and having got the reward or fruit of taking birth (at Janakpur so as to be able to see this rarest of rare spectacular sight), they are extremely gladdened in their hearts and overcome with happiness⁷ (5).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 246; and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 248.

⁷In other words, everyone, including those who pretended to be neutral even though they were jealous of the developments, felt extremely lucky to see such a wonderful sight that they had never ever witnessed in the days of their lives.]

Thereafter, on getting Janak's signal, the ministers and maids rushed to the inside of the palace and, accompanied by Shatanand, they brought Sita to the venue⁸.

Watching the matchless pristine beauty and extraordinarily charm of Sita which was like a lighted lamp that spreads its illumination everywhere, all the men and women folk forgot to even bat their eye-lids as they were spell-bound and enchanted by her bewitching beauty and magnificence⁹ just like the deer stands still when it sees a lighted lamp in the forest¹⁰ (6).

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 246; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 248.

⁹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 247—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 248.

¹⁰Refer: Verse no. 1/43, stanza no. 3 herein above of this book Geetawali.]

At this moment, the royal heralds and bards were summoned by Janak to announce to the assembly the reason for organising the bow ceremony. Thus, they stood up and said inspiring words that ignited a spirit of competition amongst the invited kings and princes, exhorting them and spurring them to get up forthwith from their seats and try their might at breaking the bow by describing the loss or harm that would come (to them if the bow is not broken), the gain and fame that would be automatically accrue (to him who breaks the formidably strong bow, together with the privilege of being accepted in marriage by Sita), the humiliation, ignominy or depression (that the kings would certainly face if they sit tight, or if they aren't able to break the bow and turn round to show their backs), the encouragement and motivation (that came with the prospect of winning immense fame and the hand of a beautiful girl in marriage), and the strength, powers and valour (of the person who would be successful in breaking the bow which would indisputably establish him as the greatest and the strongest warrior in the world).

The bards and heralds stoked the ego and ignited a sense of self-pride and majesty in the assembled kings and princes in this way while lauding them for their fame, glory and reputation to make them motivated and enthusiastic.

They announced: 'After hearing the vow of king Janak, the great and majestic kings and princes of different continents and islands on earth have assembled here. So, keeping in mind that the time has come for all of you to exhibit your unique virtues of matchless valour, strength, courage, powers and prowess in the front of this huge assembly where all the great warriors on earth have gotten together, rise from your seats and showcase your manhood, your valour, your gallantry, your strength-of-arm and your courage so that you could be unanimously declared as 'the greatest of them all'!¹¹ (7).

[¹¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

Hearing this declaration that signalled the start of the competition for breaking the bow, the assembly was filled with the sound of grave murmuring, animated whispering and shyish chuckling amongst the kings and princes as they were all hesitant and reluctant, demurring and debating amongst themselves ('ānākānī, kaṇṭha-hamśī mumhā-cāhī hōna lagī') as what to or what not to do (because the situation was very grave, and the outcome was equally hazardous, for if they won then it would be a moment of immense glory, but if they lost then it would be tantamount to being dead while alive, for it is as good as death for a great king or prince to suffer defeat in the front of a huge gathering of their peers like the one never got together any time till now)¹².

Seeing this (i.e. their uncertain demeanours and reluctance to get up and go the bow to try lifting it and breaking it), king Videha (Janak) was agonised and sad beyond measure. He gravely lamented at their lack of manhood, courage and valour, and said sarcastically to them in a taunting, acerbic tone: 'Oh Kings! All of you go back home and look after your routine work (for this task of breaking the bow is beyond your capacity). Now all of you just worship the bow and declare yourself victorious! (Or tell me, are you so scared to go near the bow even for the purpose of worshipping it? I didn't know that the world was devoid of true warriors, and that such glorious virtues as valour, gallantry and manhood have become extinct in the world)¹³, (8).

[¹²The invited kings and princes had thought that it was an ordinary competition, and since kings and their ilk are usually prone to fall victim to their inflated ego and vanity about their valour and majesty which makes them overlook the reality in their haughtiness and arrogance, they all came to Janakpur to win the competition. Once here they realised that the bow was not an ordinary one, but was Shiva's bow, and therefore extraordinary. So all hesitated and were reluctant to go to it as they knew their limitations and seriously doubted if they would be able to succeed. In the face of almost certain failure they thought it was wiser to sit put on their seats and at least preserve a semblance of majesty and power because they would could always claim they they could have certainly broken the bow if they had tried but they decided not to try at all for one or the other reason. An excuse can always be found to serve as a face-saver grace.

But in this process of remaining seated and behaving shyly and sheepishly murmuring to each other, they only proved that they had conceded defeat which was more ignominious and shameful than when if they would have at least gone to the bow and pretended to show their respects to it because it was Shiva's bow by bowing before it and worshipping it in a perfunctory manner, and then coming back to their seats. If they had done so they could at least claim that they did not break the bow, though they could have done so if they had wanted, just because they respected it for it was Shiva's bow.

This is what Janak hints at when he taunts them to go and worship the bow and declare themselves victorious.

¹³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.]

Hearing these sarcastic and acrid words of Janak, all those so-called braves drooped their heads in shame like the Mimosa plant.

Tulsidas says that even Laxman got immensely irritated and annoyed at these insulting words of Janak, but seeing Lord Sri Ram's attitude, he toned down his anger and spoke words which were part sweet and part acrimonious¹⁴ (9).

[¹⁴Refer also verse no. 1/89 herein below.]

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 252 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

(1 / 85)

भूपति बिदेह कही नीकियै जो भई है ।
 बड़े ही समाज आजु राजनिकी लाज—पति
 हाँकि आँक एक ही पिनाक छीनि लई है ॥ 1 ॥
 मेरो अनुचित न कहत लरिकारि—बस,
 पन परमिति और भाँति सुनि गई है ।
 नतरु प्रभु—प्रताप उतरु चढ़ाय चाप
 देतो पै देखाइ बल, फल, पापमई है ॥ 2 ॥
 भूमिकके हरैया उखरैया भूमिधरनिके,
 बिधि बिरचे प्रभाउ जाको जग जई है ।

बिहँसि हिये हरषि हटके लषन राम,
 सोहत सकोच सील नेह नारि नई है ॥ 3 ॥
 सहमी सभा सकल, जनक भए बिकल,
 राम लखि कौसिक असीस—आग्या दर्ई है ।
 तुलसी सुभाय गुरुपाँय लागि रघुराज
 ऋषिराजकी रजाइ माथे मानि लई है ॥ 4 ॥

(1/85)

bhūpati bidēha kahī nīkiyai jō bha'ī hai.
 baṛē hī samāja āju rājanikī lāja-pati
 hāmki āmka ēka hī pināka chīni la'ī hai.. 1..
 mērō anucita na kahata larikā'ī-basa,
 pana paramiti aura bhāmṭi suni ga'ī hai.
 nataru prabhu-pratāpa utaru caṛhāya cāpa
 dētō pai dēkhā'i bala, phala, pāpama'ī hai.. 2..
 bhūmikakē haraiyā ukharaiyā bhūmidharanikē,
 bidhi biracē prabhā'u jākō jaga ja'ī hai.
 bihamṣi hiyē haraṣi haṭakē laṣana rāma,
 sōhata sakōca sīla nēha nāri na'ī hai.. 3..
 sahamī sabhā sakala, janaka bha'e bikala,
 rāma lakhi kausika asīsa-āgyā da'ī hai.
 tulasī subhāya gurupāmṡya lāgi raghurāja
 ṛṣirājakī rajā'i māthē māni la'ī hai.. 4..

Laxman's Rebuke to Janak

Verse no. 1/85—[When none of the assembled king and princes could muster courage to go and break the bow, and instead sat with lowered heads as if ashamed of themselves, Janak was very disheartened and disgusted. He chided them in stern words, telling them to go back home empty-handed as it was clear that no one would break the bow, and so he was calling off the ceremony. This is narrated in stanza no. 8 of verse no. 1/84 herein above.

This declaration of Janak peeved Laxman extremely because the former had not even approached either of the two brothers to try their hands before making a final closure of the competition and asserting that the world was devoid of true warriors. How could Janak dare to make such a sweeping assumption 'that the world was devoid of all warriors' when Lord Ram was present there, especially when Janak was well aware the way the two brothers had easily killed ferocious demons whose mere appearance would send shivers down the spine of even the gods? After all, Lord Ram was also a noble prince of one of the greatest royal families of the time. Rather, he was the best of all the

princes assembled there not only in terms of strength, valour, courage and skill with arms, but also the most suitable candidate to be a groom for Sita. Why was Lord Ram not even given a chance? (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 253.)

Unable to bear such deemed insult and humiliation in public, Laxman got up angrily and sternly rebuked Janak for his words, challenging that if his brother, Lord Ram, gives him permission he would upturn the earth and crush it under foot, let alone the old and worn out bow which he would tear apart like the delicate stem of a lotus flower! (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 253 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.)

The following verse no. 1/85 describes Laxman's strong exception to Janak's words, and how he reacted sharply and angrily at Janak's surmising that since there was no strong warrior left on the face of earth his daughter, Sita, would have to remain unmarried. 'What a stupid assumption it is', asserted an annoyed Laxman!]

Laxman took strong exception to Janak's statement (in verse no. 1/84 above, and no. 1/89 herein below) that implied that there are no true warriors worth their salt on earth, and all those who claim to be so are only pretentious boasters. He took umbrage because Lord Ram was present in the assembly, and did not Janak know that the Lord had so easily vanquished the strongest of demons walking on the face of earth while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. So then, how dare and why did Janak make such an uncalled for, such an inappropriate, such a seething and sweeping remark even without letting Lord Ram approach the rusty old bow?

Come to it, declared Laxman in his vehement anger, if he gets the Lord's permission he would tear apart the bow, and with it crush to dust the false sense of righteousness and soothfastness that Janak has about himself and his stubbornness vis-à-vis his godforsaken vow.

So, Laxman sternly rebuked Janak with a lot of sarcasm, saying: 'Whatever king Janak has said is most appropriate. In this large gathering, the pride, ego, self-respect, honour and dignity of the so-called great kings has been snatched by this single bow which has single-handedly, and even without moving itself a bit, challenged all of them and their authority (1).

I am being a little childish in what I say, so please do not mind my words and do not be offended, but the result, the reward, of breaking this bow is quite different (than what it is made out to be and what meets the eye). Otherwise, I would have myself strung the bow on the strength of my Lord (Sri Ram), and would have answered him (Janak)¹.

I would have shown my strength and valour and abilities, but (what can I do?) I have to exercise restraint as the reward of breaking the bow myself would be very sinful, unrighteous and ignominious for me (because Sita is like my mother, and I can never ever imagine of marrying her by breaking this bow. This is the reason why I don't do it) (2).

[¹How dare Janak say that none could break the bow when I am present here? Had it not been for certain predestined great destiny that hinges on the breaking of this bow, I would have torn it apart and thrown its broken parts in front of Janak to rebuke him for

what he said that no one in the assembly could break the bow! It appears that he does not want his daughter to marry me or my brother, so in that case when I would broken the bow I would have forcibly taken his daughter's hand in marriage. But I do not want to do it because the destiny that is hinged on the bow is markedly different—and it is the Lord of the World in the form of Ram is to be united with the Shakti in the form of Sita, a union that is necessary for the larger good of the world as it would be the ground that would finally lead to the elimination of the demons, the chief purpose for which the Lord and his Shakti have come down to earth.

This foolish assembly and its equally foolish host, Janak, aren't aware of this secret. This ignorant king seems to be so deluded that he has forgotten who Sita, whom he erranously thinks to be his 'daughter', is, and similarly he doesn't know who Lord Ram actually is?]

The Creator has made this bow so strong and invincible that today it has put to shame such excellent warriors who are renowned for their strength and valour—such as 'Vanasur' who is so strong and powerful that once in some ancient time he had stolen the earth by picking it up as if it was merely a small ball and had hidden it. Another instance is that of 'Ravana' who is no less strong and powerful inasmuch as he can uproot huge mountains and lift them in his hands. Both of them have bitten the dust today². [But both of them are today so scared that they do not dare even attempt to lift the bow as they know that they would certainly fail and face huge embarrassment and loss of face. I don't bother about anyone, and if I want and Lord Ram gives me his assent, I will break this rotten bow in a time that the eye takes to blink.]'

Hearing this, Lord Sri Ram smiled in his heart and advised Laxman to stop and be calm³.

At that time when Lord Ram restrained him, he (Laxman) looked magnificent and charming because he immediately complied with the Lord's orders and stood there with a neck (i.e. the head) bowed with dignity and modesty even as he hesitated to utter a single word thereafter. Laxman silence was a sign of high culture and excellent discipline as it showed his respect and reverence for his elder brother⁴ (3).

²The two great demons of the time, Vanasur and Ravana, were also present at the venue. But they too did not dare to approach the bow, rather they slid away quietly to hide their shame and impotence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 256.

In fact, when these two demons saw Lord Ram at the venue, they were terrified at the sight as they saw a personified form of Kaal, the god of death, in the place of the Lord. This fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 241.

³Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

⁴Laxman looked so wonderful and dignified because he showed how well disciplined he was. Obeying elders and paying heed to their advise are great positive traits in one's character. Laxman was not bothered about what others would think of him of being merely a loud-mouthed boastful prince if he suddenly retracted into silence

instead of going ahead with what he had just threatened he could do—break the bow. Let it be, Laxman thought to himself, obeying his brother was a priority with him. This showed how well he was disciplined and knew the exercise self restraint without harbouring any trace of ego and pride.]

This angry outburst of resentment caused the whole assembly to be terrified (or shrink in fear). Janak became extremely excited due to a surge of latent affection that he had for Lord Ram even as sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) glanced at Lord Sri Ram, blessed him, and ordered him to break the bow⁵.

Tulsidas says that Lord Sri Ram then respectfully, and out of habit, fell at the feet of the king-amongst-sages (i.e. the great sage Vishwamitra), to pay his respect to him, and accepted his command (to go and break the bow)⁶ (4).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 254.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 254; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 255.

See also verse no. 1/89 herein below of this book.]

(1 / 86)

सोचत जनक पोच पेच परि गई है।
जोरि कर कमल निहोरि कहैं कौसिकसों,
‘आयसु भौ रामको सो मेरे दुचितई है॥ 1॥
बान, जातु—धानपति, भूप दीप सातहूके,
लोकप बिलोकत पिनाक भूमि लई है।
जोतिलिंग कथा सुनि जाको अंत पाये बिनु
आए बिधि हरि हारि सोई हाल भई है॥ 2॥
आपुही बिचारिए, निहारिए सभाकी गति,
बेद—मरजाद मानौ हेतुबाद हई है।
इन्हके जितौहैं मन सोभा अधिकानी तन,
मुखनकी सुखमा सुखद सरसई है॥ 3॥
रावरो भरोसो बल, कै है कोऊ कियो छल,
कैधों कुलको प्रभाव, कैधों लरिकाई है?
कन्या, कल कीरति, बिजय बिस्वकी बटोरि
कैधों करतार इन्हहीको निर्मई है॥ 4॥
पनको न मोह, न बिसेष चिंता सीताहूकी,
लुनिहै पै सोई सोई जोई जेहि बई है।
रहै रघुनाथकी निकाई नीकी नीके नाथ,
हाथ सो तिहारे करतूति जाकी नई है॥ 5॥
कहि ‘साधु साधु’ गाधि—सुवन सराहे राउ,
‘महाराज ! जानि जिय ठीक भली दई है’।
हरषै लखन, हरषाने बिलखाने लोग,

तुलसी मुदित जाको राजा राम जई है ॥ 6 ॥

(1/86)

sōcata janaka pōca pēca pari ga'ī hai.
 jōri kara kamala nihōri kahair̥m kausikasōm̥,
 'āyasu bhau rāmakō sō mērē ducita'ī hai.. 1..
 bāna, jātu-dhānapati, bhūpa dīpa sātahūkē,
 lōkapa bilōkata pināka bhūmi la'ī hai.
 jōtiliṅga kathā suni jākō anta pāyē binu
 ā'ē bidhi hari hāri sō'ī hāla bha'ī hai.. 2..
 āpuhī bicāri'ē, nihāri'ē sabhākī gati,
 bēda-marajāda mānau hētubāda ha'ī hai.
 inhakē jitauphair̥m mana sōbhā adhikānī tana,
 mukhanakī sukhamā sukhada sarasa'ī hai.. 3..
 rāvarō bharōsō bala, kai hai kō'ū kiyō chala,
 kaidhōm̥ kulakō prabhāva, kaidhōm̥ larikā'ī hai?
 kan'yā, kala kīrati, bijaya bisvakī baṭōri
 kaidhōm̥ karatāra inhahīkō nirma'ī hai.. 4..
 panakō na mōha, na bisēṣa cintā sītāhūkī,
 lunihai pai sō'ī sō'ī jō'ī jēhi ba'ī hai.
 rahai raghunāthakī nikā'ī nīkī nīkē nātha,
 hātha sō tihārē karatūti jākī na'ī hai'.. 5..
 kahi 'sādhu sādhu' gādhi-suvana sarāhē rā'u,
 'mahārāja! jāni jiya ṭhīka bhalī da'ī hai'.
 haraṣai lakhana, haraṣānē bilakhānē lōga,
 tulasī mudita jākō rājā rāma ja'ī hai.. 6..

Janak's regret

Verse no. 1/86—[When none of the competing kings and princes could break the bow and Janak was filled with dejection, despairing at his own vows that have put him in such a dire situation, and in his utter dismay he had literally declared the bow-breaking ceremony closed, Laxman had stood up and rebuked Janak in very strong words. At that time, realizing that the opportunity has arrived, the all-knowing great sage Vishwamitra intervened and asked Lord Ram to go and break the bow. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254.

Janak on the one hand felt exceedingly glad that it looks his fortunes are taking a good turn for inside his own heart he had wanted to see Lord Ram as his son-in-law, but on the other hand he had grave doubts about the Lord's ability to actually lift and break the bow which had till now stubbornly refused to budge even an inch and had led all the mighty kings and princes on the face of earth to be defeated and put to shame.

So, when Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow so that Janak's agony and grief are taken care of, the latter was flustered and confused. First it was Laxman's sharp tongue with which he was already scathed, and now it is a piquant situation because the mighty sage Vishwamitra has intervened to tell Lord Ram to break the bow, a possibility that seemed very remote and almost hard to imagine for Janak, given the tender body and very young age of the Lord, especially when all the brave warriors who were veterans, war-hardened, with muscular and well-tuned bodies, had already bitten the dust.

Besides this, Janak was also reluctant and doubtful whether Lord Ram should be allowed to go to the bow because he thought that his dignity and self-respect have already been put on the block, and he would be a subject of world-wide laughter, ridicule and scorn if he now allowed anyone to go to the bow after once declaring the ceremony virtually closed (refer: verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 3 herein above).

He was already smarting at Laxman's public rebuke, and so when he faced the prospect of the mighty sage asking Laxman's elder brother Lord Ram to go and break the bow even without seeking as much as a formal nod from Janak, it was like adding salt to his wounds. He didn't have the courage to oppose Vishwamitra and tell him that now that Lord Ram's younger brother Laxman has insulted him in public, he would not have anyone from his family break the bow and marry his daughter. No king having self-respect will allow such a thing!

Hence, Janak expressed his apprehensions in a polite and courteous way to sage Vishwamitra. This verse describes this situation.]

Janak was extremely worried and thoughtful: 'It is a great dilemma; I am in a grave quandary (not knowing what to do).'

He earnestly begged before Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) with joined palms (as a gesture of politeness and showing the urgency of what he wished to say)—'Lord, I am concerned (and worried) and am in doubt about the orders you have given to Sri Ram.

(You must have observed that—) As soon as this bow saw Vanasur, the demon king Ravana, the kings of the seven continents, and the Lokpals (the custodians of the world who had gathered there to try their luck at breaking of the bow), it seemed to have firmly grasped the earth and stuck to it so tightly (*pināka bhūmi laī hai*) that it refused to budge even a fraction of a measurement.

Even as Brahma (the creator) and Vishnu (the sustainer of creation), who had heard about the mystery and the mystical glory of Lord Shiva's 'Jyotirlingam' (a self-illuminated, shaft-of-light symbol of Lord Shiva), had returned empty-handed when they failed to find the beginning or the end of it inspite of their wandering in the heavens and the subterranean world in order to determine it (*jōtilīṅga kathā suni jākō anta pāyē binu ā'ē bidhi hari hāri*), the same condition prevails with this bow. [That is, the world's great kings and the brave warriors of great repute and of all dispensations have failed to measure-up to the bow's strength inspite of their trying their best.] (1-2).

Oh sage, think for yourself and look at the condition and demeanours of the assembly. It appears that the science of logic (*hētubāda*) has destroyed (defied and subverted) the sanctity and importance of the Vedas (*bēda-marajāda mānau haī hai*)¹.

(Compared to the dejected, morose and despaired countenance of the assembled kings—) The mind of these (two) boys are as delightful as is the increased charm of their bodies, while the beautiful countenance of their faces appears to provide (effuse, show) great pleasure². (3).

[¹This stanza highlights Janak's immensity of regret. It was observed by him that all the competing kings were of a much senior age than Sita, and none was a suitable match for her when the general charm and appeal of beauty of a married couple was concerned. Say, what would have happened if by fate any one of the assembled kings would have broken the bow; would not Sita be tied to someone not at all to her liking or a remotest match with her?

Forget about that also: consider this—when the kings had failed to move the bow individually, they had tried to move it together in their hundreds and thousands, all of them putting in their full might to push and move it. Didn't any one of them stand back and think about the consequences of this nonsense—about what would happen to Sita's fate if say a hundred kings simultaneously claimed her to be their wife? Its absolutely ridiculous and mad to imagine the consequences—but the irony is that since the vow of Janak said that Sita would be wed to anyone who broke the bow, all successful candidates would have equal right to claim her, and even her father would be forced to consent to this most incongruous development.

This is what Janak hints at. He implies that when these kings decided to break the bow jointly, didn't they realize that they are breaking the sanctity of the bond of marriage as envisaged in the Vedas, the ancient scriptures that lay down strict laws of morality and ethical conduct? Didn't they realize that if they were successful and Janak was forced to give Sita to them in marriage by the law of logic that states that 'anyone who succeeds to fulfil the condition of the competition as declared in Janak's vow would marry Sita', wouldn't it violate the laws of the Vedas and the highest standards of ethics and morality that they expect the people to uphold?

This stanza therefore is as much an expression of dismay at the falling standards of moral conduct amongst the populace as it is a virtual condemnation of Janak for making ridiculous vows.

²Janak means that Lord Sri Ram and Laxman are not at all worried or concerned at the prospect of being unable to break the bow and face defeat. They aren't bothered about the formidability of the task at hand should anyone challenge Laxman to carry out his threats of breaking the bow if Lord Ram permits him, and neither is the Lord concerned as to what would happen if he himself is asked to do it instead of Laxman, as presently you have asked him to. Just look at all the kings and princes in the assembly who look as if they have lost all their treasure and dignity and self-respect by being unable to break the bow. Don't they realize that this is a competition where only one can win, and that greatness lies in having a spirit of sportsmanship in such situations and not in being jealous of others or getting sullen on having failed. After all, not everyone wins a competition, and not all are equally strong and powerful. Say, how nice it would been if the assembled kings had taken their inability to break the bow cheerfully in a lively spirit of a sport. What is there to feel so gloomy, insulted and crestfallen that all of the kings and princes have drooped their necks and drawn a long face?

In this contrast, how pleasant and nice it is to see cheer and a sweet smile on the face of these two brothers! Instead of feeling nervous once you have asked Lord Ram to

get up and go to the bow to break it, the two brothers are glowing with confidence as if they are ready to face the challenge happily and to show their mettle and prove their superiority over all the kings, and by extension over the demon Ravana who was also present on this occasion just a while ago.]

(Janak says—) The confidence and radiance on their faces is either due to their reliance on your (i.e. sage Vishwamitra's) unfailing strength and potential powers (because they know that all would be fine with your blessing and they can never fail because you are with them—*rāvarō bharōsō bala*), or they are some divine Being in this disguise (*kai hai kō'ū kiyō chala*—because only God or some Divine Entity can have this sort of confidence and fearlessness in him, for no human being can ever gather courage to keep smiling if he was asked to do the same thing as these kings had expected to do after seeing what the latter had faced a while ago), or it may be due to the glorious effect of their race (i.e. the 'Sun/Solar Race' to which the two brothers belonged, here meaning that the shine on their face is due to their inheritance of radiance and splendour from the Sun God—*kaidhōm kulakō prabhāva*), or it might be just due to their childish arrogance and carelessness (because children do not understand the gravity of any situation and continue to play around cheerfully even when the rest of the adults around them are extremely worried and grave—*kaidhōm larikā'ī hai*).

Or, say indeed, is it that the Creator has created my daughter Sita for this treasury of world-wide fame and victory that is embodied in the person of Lord Sri Ram—*bijaya bisvakī baṭōri kaidhōm karatāra inhahikō nirma'ī hai*!

Oh Sage! I wonder what (mystery) it is! (4).

I am not worried about my vows and the fear of ignominy that has come to me due to it, and neither am I greatly concerned about the fate of Sita because one reaps what one sows³.

But I want that the good fame and glory of Raghunath (Sri Ram) should be maintained and retained in the way it stands at present without any blemish on it or without it getting diminished. So, oh Lord, it is in your hand now, as your deeds are full of marvels and mysteries.⁴ (5).

[³If my past deeds and Sita's fate prescribe that she remains unmarried, what can I do. It is all my fault that I made such a godforsaken vow, but now it is a thing that can't be changed. I will bear with all the punishment that is destined for me, and so would Sita.

⁴Janak bethoughted to himself that it is a great risk to ask Sri Ram to break the bow, because if he fails to do so the already established charm of the two princes would turn sour and they would be publicly humiliated and subjected to ridicule like the other kings and princes had been. Janak says that he does not want this thing to happen at all. So he pleaded with sage Vishwamitra that it is better to keep the charm and glory of the two brothers intact and desist from taking any risk that may put the dignity and majesty of Lord Ram to any peril, because it is very uncertain as what would happen if he goes to the bow. Suppose the bow refuses to move, then it would be certain defeat for the Lord, and an utterly depressing moment for all of them who have held the Lord dear to their hearts. It's far better therefore in not insisting on Lord Ram trying to lift the bow and break it, for it would help to maintain the aura of Sri Ram's abilities and invincibilities and charm in its pristine and virginal form as it stands at present. No one can predict how

the bow would react; if it does the way it had done with the other kings and princes till this time, the result is too obvious to discuss, and it would be devastating.

There is another subtle hint that Janak intended to convey to sage Vishwamitra here. He internally intends to marry his daughter Sita to Lord Ram, to hell with his vows, but he has to wait till the assembly dissolves and all the invited kings go back home. Then he will marry Sita to Lord Ram. For this, it is necessary that Lord Ram's abilities and reputation remain unsullied and as virgin as they are now because they have not been tested in public and therefore it could be assumed later on that Lord Ram could have broken the bow had he been given a chance. This would be a better option than to take the risk of allowing Lord Ram to try to break the bow in view of the uncertainty that surrounds the outcome. Say, what would happen, god forbid, if he fails?

In the present scenario Janak could always say in future that after the bow-ceremony ended in a failure to find a groom for his daughter, and since it a moral and religious duty of a parent to marry off his daughter while he or she is still alive as keeping the daughter unmarried is extremely wrong, Janak had decided to marry her directly to the groom of his choice, or even of his daughter. This would prevent anyone from raising a finger of wrong-doing against Janak or even at the newly-wed couple in the future.

So therefore, Janak bethoughted to himself and pleaded with sage Vishwamitra to desist from insisting that Lord Ram go and break the bow because the outcome is highly uncertain, and it is exceedingly important to avoid an unsavoury situation in case he fails to do so and joins the group of other failed kings and princes as he (Janak) has in mind that later on he would contrive of some means whereby he would betroth his daughter to Sri Ram, but for that wish of his to fructify it is essential that the fate of what happens when Sri Ram tries his hand on the bow kept under wraps, for if by godforbidden chance he fails then it would be well neigh impossible to give effect to his plans. It is better and advisable to keep quiet now to save face and grace.]

Exclaiming 'Sadhu-Sadhu' ('sādhū sādhū' literally meaning 'you are true, glory be to you'), the son of Gaadhi (gādhī-suvana, i.e. Vishwamitra) praised the king (Janak) and said, 'Oh Great King! You had thought it proper and had wisely decided to do what you did (jāni jiya ṭhika bhalī da'ī hai). (So, do not worry now)'.⁵

Realising that what he had wanted was being done, Laxman felt glad (haraṣai lakhana). The citizens, on the other hand, were torn between sadness and joy, between feeling distressed and exhilarated (haraṣānē bilakhānē lōga)⁵.

Tulsidas, whose Lord and king Sri Ram is certain to be victorious, is also extremely delighted at this prospect (6).

[⁵The citizens were divided on the prospect of allowing Lord Ram to break the bow. Some of them were apprehensive like Janak: what would happen if Lord Ram could not break the bow? Such people felt sad and gloomy.

Others were full of confidence that Lord Ram would certainly break the bow because they had heard of Lord's glories and stupendous feats about his killing fierce demons and of liberating Ahilya from her curse of being in the form of a stone. These people now exulted that their wishes would finally come true.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 261.]

(1 / 87)

सुजन सराहैं जो जनक बात कही है।
 रामहि सोहानी जानि, मुनिमनमानी सुनि,
 नीच महिपावली दहन बिनु दही है॥ 1॥
 कहैं गाधिनंदन मुदित रघुनंदनसों,
 नृपगति अगह, गिरा न जाति गही है।
 देखे—सुने भूपति अनेक झूठे झूठे नाम,
 साँचे तिरहुतिनाथ, साखि देति मही है॥ 2॥
 रागऊ बिराग, भोग जोग जोगवत मन,
 जोगी जागबलिक प्रसाद सिद्धि लही है।
 ताते न तरनितें न सीरे सुधाकरहू तें,
 सहज समाधि निरुपाधि निरबही है॥ 3॥
 ऐसेउ अगाध बोध रावरे सनेह—बस,
 बिकल बिलोकति, दुचितई सही है।
 कामधेनु—कृपा हुलसानी तुलसीस उर,
 पन—सिसु हेरि, मरजाद बाँधी रही है॥ 4॥

(1/87)

sujana sarāhaim̐ jō janaka bāta kahī hai.
 rāmahi sōhānī jāni, munimanamānī suni,
 nīca mahipāvalī dahana binu dahī hai.. 1..
 kahaim̐ gādhinandana mudita raghunandanasōm̐,
 nr̥pagati agaha, girā na jāti gahī hai.
 dēkhē-sunē bhūpati anēka jhūṭhē jhūṭhē nāma,
 sām̐cē tirahutinātha, sākhi dēti mahī hai.. 2..
 rāga'ū birāga, bhōga jōga jōgavata mana,
 jōgī jāgabalika prasāda sid'dhi lahī hai.
 tātē na taranitēm̐ na sīrē sudhākarahū tēm̐,
 sahaja samādhi nirupādhi nirabahī hai.. 3..
 aisē'u agādha bōdha rāvarē sanēha-basa,
 bikala bilōkati, ducitaī sahī hai.
 kāmādhēnu-kr̥pā hulasānī tulasīsa ura,
 pana-sisu hēri, marajāda bām̐dhī rahī hai.. 4..

Praise of Janak by sage Vishwamitra

Verse no. 1/87—The pure-hearted ones (sujana) praised what Janak had just said (in verse 1/86). [That is, those who had begun to love Lord Ram and had endeared him to their hearts agreed with Janak that it would not be proper to put the pristine charm and

dignity of the Lord to any peril by a risky test, and so it is better to let the things rest as they are at present.]

But considering that this proposal (of Janak) was pleasing to (i.e. found favour with) Sri Ram and seeing that it had the tacit support of Vishwamitra, the rows of wicked kings got burnt (out of jealousy, envy and malice) even without fire¹ (1).

[#Now, the important question is this: King Janak was obviously speaking softly with Vishwamitra, and it is not possible that those who were sitting at some distance from where the raised platform was on which the sage and the two brothers were seated beside Janak can hear whatever Janak said to the sage. Taking this into consideration, this stanza can be interpreted in a different way to mean that:--

“The kings, who were full of ego and malice, were exceedingly jealous when they observed Janak bowing before sage Vishwamitra, the guardian of the two brothers, and saying something to him very politely in the backdrop of what Laxman had just said a while ago, assuming that he (Janak), after having contrived surreptitiously a way by which none of the kings would break the bow, and then having insulted the other kings for their inability to break the bow, he was now, as pre-planned, ostensibly requesting the sage to tell Lord Ram to go and break the bow for he knew that the latter would certainly succeed in breaking it as has been already devised.”

If this was true, guessed the malicious kings and princes, then certainly its unacceptable.

¹The kings who were defeated in their effort to lift and break the bow were already smarting at their humiliation. They were exceedingly jealous of the two princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, because of the special treatment king Janak had shown them. So when sage Vishwamitra asked the Lord to go and break the bow, they felt glad that now he too would join their ranks in failure because they were exceedingly sure that Lord Ram would never be able to break the bow when all of them have failed to do so inspite of their great strength and valour put to full use individually as well as collectively. And when Lord Ram fails to break the bow, then all the aura of charm and dignity and enchantment surrounding him would be thrown to the wind.

But now when it seems that this possibility of Lord Ram going to the bow and facing defeat is remote, given Janak's request to sage Vishwamitra to desist from insisting on it, these jealous kings felt crestfallen as they had lost a chance to laugh and jeer at their adversary, Lord Ram.

When the kings had failed to lift and break the bow, Janak had sternly rebuked them with scornful words for their incompetence, their inaptness, their impotence, their lack of strength and manhood (refer: verse no. 1/84, stanza no. 8, and no. 1/89). And they had to bear his insult with lowered heads. Their humiliation was further compounded when Laxman had boldly and with impunity let loose a diatribe against Janak in full assembly (with impunity refer: verse no. 1/85), which also implicated all the assembled kings and princes inasmuch as Laxman's words clearly implied that he alone is more than a match against the combined might of all the kings and princes. And now to make matters worse, they see Janak pleading before the guardian of the two princes, i.e. sage Vishwamitra, in a very humble way instead of becoming angry at Laxman and taking strong action against him for the latter's public show of incourtesy. So these developments literally burnt or chapped the ego and vanity of all the pervert-minded kings to their core.]

{Seeing how Janak was highly emotional and overcome with grief and pain at the ignominious situation that stares him on the face, and how he does not want to aggravate his agony by putting Lord Ram's immaculate charm and dignity on the block for Janak had begun to have a strong feeling of endearment for Lord Ram, the all-knowing and wise sage Vishwamitra praised him in the following stanzas:--}

Then the son of Gaadhi (i.e. Vishwamitra) praised king Janak before Raghunandan (Lord Sri Ram), saying cheerfully to him: "The mental state of Janak is beyond comprehension; it cannot be described in words. There are a number of great kings I have seen and heard about, but it seemeth to me that all of them are untruthful and dishonest in what they say, and their fame and glory is only for a namesake (i.e. they are unworthy of the fame and reputation that goes with their names).

The only truthful one who is soothfast to his words (i.e. one who stands by his words and upon whom one can rely) is the 'Lord of Tirhut' (*tirahutinātha*; i.e. king Janak; meaning "the kingdom of Janakpur"; or "the king of the whole world which has three divisions, the heaven, the earth and the lower world"). At this time verily, the whole earth (i.e. the entire world that is represented by the assembly of all the great kings and princes from all corners of the earth) stands witness to it (i.e. the fact that Janak is true and steadfast in his words)² (2).

[²Inspite of the doomed fate of his daughter Sita, Janak has stood steady and fast to his vows. He has openly declared that he would prefer his daughter remain unmarried and bear with its attendant ignominy and humiliation than to rescind on his words regarding marrying her to someone who breaks the bow. Refer: Verse no. 1/89, stanza nos. 5-7, and no. 1/84, stanza no. 8.]

His (Janak's) mental state and level of enlightenment is very unique inasmuch as he presents a study in contrast, for on the one hand he appears to be attached to the world, enjoying its pleasures and material comforts, and is affected by its various inconsistencies like an ordinary man who is engrossed in the affairs of the material world and moved emotionally by its different situations, and on the other hand he remains totally aloof from the world, unconcerned about all its material things and developments as no external stimuli has any effect on his mental state of equanimity and detachment like a true ascetic though he can, at the same time, fully enjoy the world and its charms (*rāga'ū birāga, bhōga jōga jōgavata mana, jōgī*).

He has acquired all types of Siddhis (spiritual and mystical expertise) by the blessings of the great mystic named Yagyawalka³. He is neither scorched by the sun nor calmed by the moon (*tātē na taranitēm na sīrē sudhākarahū tēm*; i.e. his nature is one of extreme equanimity, detachment and dispassion, not being affected by any of the worldly emotional inputs, whether they are positive or negative, and he remains totally indifferent to and unaffected by the turmoil and torments as well as the charms and temptations of this mundane existence).

Indeed, he has been able to maintain the stage of natural Samadhi (*sahaja samādhi*; a natural, and not artificial, trance-like state of existence when a person remains unconscious with regard to the external physical world because he is lost in the thoughts of his 'true self' which is the Atma or the pure conscious soul) without trying to

get any honour or fame for it, nor pretending that he is a highly enlightened soul (nirupādhi nirabahi hai) (3).

[³Sage Yagyawalkya was the greatest sage of his time with respect to metaphysical knowledge. He had been declared the greatest of all wise men in a huge assembly of learned men once when a conclave was organized by king Janak with the purpose of fostering and spreading metaphysical and spiritual knowledge and cultivating a spirit of healthy debate in this field. Janak was so highly impressed by sage Yagyawalkya knowledge and prowess that he had accepted his discipleship and had entered into a private debate with the sage. This entire episode is narrated in great detail in Shukla Yajur Veda's "Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman nos. 1-9, and Canto 4, Brahman nos. 1-4."]

Inspite of being endowed with such a measureless and fathomless virtues of wisdom and enlightenment (aisē'u agādha bōdha), he presently looks so agitated, excited, nervous, perplexed and consternated as if he is in great mental agony and overwhelmed with worries (bikala bilōkati, ducitaī sahī hai) because he has immense love and affection for you (Lord Ram) in his heart (rāvarē sanēha-basa).'

Hearing these words of praise for king Janak from his Guru, Lord Ram, who is the Lord of Tulsidas (tulasīsa), felt very glad in his heart (hulasānī ura).

Lord Ram's compassionate and merciful heart, which is like a personified form of the all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu (kāmadhēnu-krpā), was greatly moved by the pitiful condition of Janak who was tied to his vows just like a calf whose legs were tied by a rope (pana-sisu hēri).

But this cow could not rush to deliver the calf that was tied with the rope because it had to observe certain minimum etiquette, maintain decorum, adhere to established traditions, and show respect to its keeper (marajāda bām̐dhī rahī hai)⁴ (4).

[⁴In this stanza, Lord Ram's heart is likened to the Kamdhenu cow, king Janak who did not want to break his vows to the tormented calf tied with the rope, and sage Vishwamitra as the cow's keeper. When the cow sees its calf, the former wishes to rush to the latter but may be restricted by the keeper. In this case, when Lord Ram heard how Janak was mentally tormented and full of grief, he wished to immediately go and break the bow to provide relief to him, but presently he had to restrain himself from doing so without the orders of his guardian and guru, sage Vishwamitra.

Lord Sri Ram's heart was so full of compassion at the miserable condition of Janak that he was very eager to alleviate and mitigate his sufferings immediately, but had to wait for Vishwamitra's orders.]

(1 / 88)

ऋषिराज राजा आजु जनक समान को?

आपु यहि भाँति प्रीति सहित सराहित,

रागी औ बिरागी बड़भागी ऐसो आन को? ॥ १ ॥

भूमि-भोग करत अनुभवत जोग-सुख

मुनि-मन-अगम अलख गति जान को?

गुर-हर-पद-नेहु, गेह बसि भौ बिदेह,
 अगुन-सगुन-प्रभु-भजन-सयान को ? ॥ 2 ॥
 कहनि रहनि एक, बिरति बिबेक नीति,
 बेद-बुध-संमत पथीन निरबानको ?
 गाँठि बिनु गुनकी कठिन जड़-चेतनकी,
 छोरी अनायास, साधु सोधक अपान को ॥ 3 ॥
 सुनि रघुबीरकी बचन-रचनाकी रीति,
 भयो मिथिलेस मानो दीपक बिहानको ।
 मिट्यो महामोह जीको, छूट्यो पोच सोच सीको,
 जान्यो अवतार भयो पुरुष पुरानको ॥ 4 ॥
 सभा, नृप, गुर, नर-नारि पुर, नभ सुर,
 सब चितवत मुख करुनानिधानको ।
 एकै एक कहत प्रगट एक प्रेम-बस,
 तुलसीस तोरिये सरासन इसानको ॥ 5 ॥

(1/88)

ṛṣirāja rājā āju janaka samāna kō?
 āpu yahi bhāmṭi prīti sahita sarāhita,
 rāgī au birāgī barābhāgī aisō āna kō?... 1..
 bhūmi-bhōga karata anubhavata jōga-sukha
 muni-mana-agama alakha gati jāna kō?
 gura-hara-pada-nēhu, gēha basi bhau bidēha,
 aguna-saguna-prabhu-bhajana-sayāna kō?... 2..
 kahani rahani ēka, birati bibēka nīti,
 bēda-budha-sammata pathīna nirabānakō?
 gāmṭhi binu gunakī kaṭhina jara-cētanakī,
 chōrī anāyāsa, sādhu sōdhaka apāna kō.. 3..
 suni raghubīrakī bacana-racanākī rīti,
 bhayō mithilēsa mālō dīpaka bihānakō.
 miṭyō mahāmōha jīkō, chūṭyō pōca sōca sīkō,
 jān'yō avatāra bhayō puruṣa purānakō.. 4..
 sabhā, nrpa, gura, nara-nāri pura, nabha sura,
 saba citavata mukha karunānidhānakō.
 ēkai ēka kahata pragaṭa ēka prēma-basa,
 tulasīsa tōriyē sarāsana isānakō.. 5..

Lord Rām's Reply

Verse no. 1/88—Lord Sri Ram replied to sage Vishwamitra: 'Oh King of Sages (ṛṣirāja)! Which king today is as great as Janak that you are so affectionately praising him so much?

Verily, who else is so lucky and fortunate to have attained the eclectic and the rarest of rare spiritual state of existence that makes it possible for him to be involved in the affairs of this gross mundane world on the one hand, and be totally detached from and dispassionate towards it on the other hand simultaneously (rāgī au birāgī)¹? (1).

[¹Refer: Verse no. 1/87, stanza no. 3 herein above.]

He enjoys the pleasures of this world, but at the same time also enjoys the bliss of Yoga ('meditation' which helps one to concentrate on the Supreme Lord as well as the pure conscious Self, to be detached from and be neutral towards the surrounding tumult of the gross world, to be absolutely calm and serene) (bhūmi-bhōga karata anubhavata jōga-sukha).

His mental and spiritual condition is beyond ordinary perception and is so exalted that it is even inaccessible even for the minds and intellect of hermits and sages to comprehend. This being the case, who can know (measure, understand or fathom) it? (muni-mana-agama alakha gati jāna kō?)

He has affection (and devotion) for the holy feet of his Guru (Shatanand, Janak's moral preceptor) as well as for Lord Har (Lord Shiva) (gura-hara-pada-nēhu).

He has attained the exalted state of spiritual realisation that enables a person to be detached from all worldly attachments and the usual entanglements of a family and the responsibilities that are incumbent for a householder's life inspite of living as an ordinary householder who duly and diligently fulfils all his duties and responsibilities in the household (gēha basi bhau bidēha).

Who else is more adept and proficient in worshipping both the Saguna as well as the Nirguna form of the Lord? (aguna-saguna-prabhu-bhajana-sayāna kō?)² (2).

[²The 'Saguna' form of the Lord is his form that is visible, grosser in comparison to the Nirguna form, and has various attributes and characters, while the 'Nirguna' form is that which is formless, invisible, without specific attributes, and cosmic in nature because it is extremely subtle and sublime. For instance, 'Lord Ram' is the Saguna form of the 'Supreme Being' represented by 'Lord Vishnu' who is Nirguna in form. In the context of Janak it implies that he is so highly enlightened that he knows that he is worshipping the same Supreme Being in the latter's primary form that is 'Nirguna', i.e. a form that is synonymous with pure Consciousness, the true Self, the Atma or the Soul which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, invisible, sublime and subtle, and in the Lord's 'Saguna' form that is present right before his eyes in the person of Lord Ram. Hence, Janak views Lord Ram not as an ordinary prince but as a manifestation of the Supreme Lord, the cosmic Soul, the cosmic Self and the pure Consciousness that he worships, adores and pays his obeisance to during meditation and contemplation.]

Who else is like him in his actions and words that are in sync with each other, and who is so soothfast in his words and actions that are reflected in his life as him (for Janak does what he says; he believes in truth; he is not pretentious, deceitful or boastful)? (kahani rahani ēka?).

Say, who else is like him in being a wise and enlightened traveller on the path of renunciation (Vairagya), one who is bestowed with the virtue of wisdom (Vivek), is an

upholder of the laws and regulations or codified codes of conduct as sanctioned by the scriptures (Niti), and follows the spiritual path that leads one to deliverance, emancipation and salvation (Nirvana)? (birati bibēka nīti, bēda-budha-sammata pathīna nirabānakō?)

Verily, he has very effortlessly untied (de-mystified, decoded, simplified, untangled--chōrī anāyāsa) the difficult knot represented by the sense of duality in this world, the notion that there is an inanimate aspect and an animate aspect (gāmṭhi kaṭhina jaṛa-cētanakī), a perception that has no merit in it (gāmṭhi binu gunakī) but that keeps other creatures confused and perplexed³.

Who else has researched and found out the truth about one's true nature⁴ (sādhū sōdhaka apāna kō) (3).

[³Janak had reached that exalted state of existence when he did not see any duality in this world, for he saw his Lord everywhere, in all things and in all beings. He did not differentiate between a friend or an enemy, or a human and an animal, or between this flower and that one, and so on. This is because he realised that the same 'pure consciousness' known as the Atma, which is the true identity of any living being, lives in all the Jivas or creatures of this creation no matter of what form and shape, whether that Jiva is mobile (such as animals) or immobile (such as many members of the animal kingdom and a majority of the members of the plant kingdom). For instance, it will be wrong to say that only humans feel pain, for it is equally felt by animals of all denominations. Even science has acknowledged that plants too have life like the members of the animal kingdom.

⁴Janak has become extremely self-realised and enlightened as he has understood the true nature of the 'self'. This 'self' is nothing but pure consciousness, and the latter is a universal entity, being omnipresent and all-pervading. This 'pure consciousness' is called the Atma or the soul of the individual creature who is known as the 'Jiva' at the micro level of creation, and the same Atma in its cosmic form is the Supreme Atma known as the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Self, the Supreme Soul, the Supreme Being. Hence, there is no truth in having duality anywhere, for what is here is there as well. There is no distinction between the two—this is the essential philosophy of Vedant.]

When Janak heard Lord Ram speak curtously and so highly of him, using honourable words that showed the latter's immense respect for the former and also echoed the sage's own respectful view of him, Janak felt shy and humbled, and he was rendered speechless in his modesty just like a lamp whose glow dims at dawn⁵.

(Observing the deep analytical ability of Lord Sri Ram in the metaphysical realm, and the fact that he showed the greatest of practical wisdom in undoing the damage done by Laxman's recent impolite behaviour by publicly lavishing the greatest of respects and praises for Janak and declaring that there is indeed no one as noble, as great and as enlightened as Janak in the world, the king felt extremely glad and reassured. Hence—) The great sense of despair and grief and dejection that had clouded Janak's mind and heart a while ago, soon cleared (miṭyō mahāmōha jīkō), and so his worries about Sita and her future were removed forthwith (chūṭyō pōca sōca sīkō).

Janak's doubts were removed (*miṭyō mahāmōha jīkō*), and he realised that indeed it is true that the 'Puran Purush', the Great Lord about whom the ancient scriptures had said would manifest himself, has finally revealed himself and come down on earth (in the person of Lord Ram) (*jān'yō avatāra bhayō puruṣa purānakō*)⁶. (4).

[⁵This is a figure of speech to stress that Janak was extremely modest and humble, being unpretentious in his wisdom and enlightenment so much that when both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra heaped praises on him and honoured him in public, he felt a bit embarrassed and shy. He lowered his head in modesty and humility instead of broadening his chest, lifting his shoulders and raising his head a notch higher with bulging pride and fattened ego. It is compared to the situation when the lamp appears to shine a little less brightly as soon as the light of the day dawns, not that it has actually lost its brilliance but it simply feels shy and humbled in front of the sun's rays.

Hence, when two great personalities like sage Vishwamitra and Lord Ram had so lavishly praised Janak, the latter felt exceedingly honoured and fortunate so much that he seemed to be overwhelmed with the laurels and paeans sung in his honour, making him so emotional that he was lost for words to even thank the sage and the prince.

This was the first time since the two brothers had come to Janakpur that Janak had heard Lord Ram speak. So when the Lord spoke for the first time using sweet and pleasant words to praise king Janak, words that not only endorsed what sage Vishwamitra had said about the king but also helped to neutralise the harm that Laxman's scathing remarks a while ago had created, Janak was dumbfounded.

Janak was amazed at the politeness and etiquette and wisdom of Lord Ram, and his prudent, adroit and deft handling of the piquant and nasty situation that arose when his brother Laxman had acted childishly and impolitely by admonishing the noble host, king Janak who was one of the greatest kings of his time, publicly, something that was never heard of anywhere. Lord Ram had, in one master stroke, nullified and neutralised all the wrong done by Laxman by politely heaping praises on him (Janak) with words that were at once extremely elegant, polite, sweet and pleasant to hear so that Janak's ruffled feelings and hurt heart could be soothed and calmed down. So, Janak was amazed at Lord Ram's wisdom and maturity and sense of propriety that he wished to immediately counter his brother's harsh words with words that were exceedingly acceptable and welcome and polite and sweet to the extreme, words that what Laxman had said was not meant to mean any slight on the great king but were said because he is still a child who became angry as is the wont of children.

Therefore, in one deft stroke of prudence Lord Ram not only assuaged Janak's hurt emotions but also gave a signal to the whole assembly that his (Lord Ram's) family holds king Janak in the highest esteem, that the Lord disapproves of his brother's behaviour, and what Laxman had said of Janak a while ago was not at all either the view of Lord Ram nor of the mighty sage Vishwamitra, nor in any way meant to undermine the greatness and majesty of the great king Janak.

⁶When king Janak had first seen Lord Ram when he went to welcome sage Vishwamitra upon the latter's arrival at Janakpur with the two brothers, he was instantly influenced by the Lord and the halo of divine aura surrounding the latter. It was similar to

the case that one cannot overlook the presence of the sun no matter how busy or distracted he may be.

Being a wise man who was extremely detached from all worldly charms, the way the first sight of Lord Ram enchanted king Janak had amazed him no end, and the king had minced no words to express his astonishment to the sage, asking him who this prince was who has moved his heart like no one has ever done before. The all-knowing wise sage Vishwamitra had smiled and hinted to the king that there is truth in his suspicion that Lord Ram was no ordinary prince, but some Divine Being in a human garb. This episode and conversation is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Doha no. 216.]

At this moment, all those present at the venue—the whole assembly consisting of the citizens and noble guests, the king (Janak) himself, the two Gurus (Vishwamitra and Shatanand), as well as the Gods who were watching the proceedings from the sky (heavens)—began to watch Lord Sri Ram's face most affectionately, and talking amongst themselves they unanimously expressed their wish that the Lord of Tulsidas, i.e. Lord Ram, should now break the bow⁷ (5).

[⁷Vishwamitra had been perhaps waiting for this moment. He wanted to feel the pulse of the people, the host king Janak and the Gods before ordering Lord Ram to go and break the bow. Now the signal was clear. The citizens were totally in favour of Sri Ram breaking the bow, and so were all the noble-hearted guests and the host king Janak himself. The support of the heavenly Gods was crucial because the bow belonged to Lord Shiva, the most revered of all the Gods and their senior most Authority. This is in democratic tradition that the master does what his subjects wish him to do.

This ingenious handling of the sticky situation by Lord Ram and his soothing words that enlivened the heart of Janak as well as the rest of the citizens in the backdrop of Laxman's unsavoury remarks saved the day, and it further endeared Sri Ram to the masses who were by now becoming almost hysterical and impatient with excess of joy. This trick also took care of any chance of defeated kings throwing tantrums as they would have by now realised the way the tide was turning, and would desist from being imprudent for fear of the masses in an alien land who would rise against them if they tried to play any dirty tricks.]

राग मारु

(1 / 89)

सुनो भैया भूप सकल दै कान।

बज्ररेख गजदसन जनक-पन बेद-बिदित, जग जान॥ 1॥

घोर कठोर पुरारि-सरासन, नाम प्रसिद्ध पिनाकु।

जो दसकंठ दियो बाँवों, जेहि हर-गिरि किया है मनाकु॥ 2॥

भूमि-भाल भ्राजत, न चलत सो, ज्यों बिरंचिको आँकु।

धनु तोरै सोई बरै जानकी, राउ होइ कि राँकु॥ 3॥

सुनि आमरषि उठे अवनीपति, लगै बचन जनु तीर।

टरै न चाप, करै अपनी सी महा महा बलधीर॥ 4॥
 नमित-सीस सोचहिं सलज्ज सब श्रीहत भए सरीर।
 बोले जनक बिलोकि सीय तन दुखित सरोष अधीर॥ 5॥
 सप्त दीप नव खंड भूमिके भूपतिबुंद जुरे।
 बड़ो लाभ कन्या-कीरतिको, जहँ-तहँ महिप मुरे॥ 6॥
 डग्यौ न धनु, जनु बीर-बिगत महि, किधौ कहँ सुभट दुरे।
 रोषे लखन बिकट भृकुटी करि, भुज अरु अधर फुरे॥ 7॥
 सुनहु भानुकुल-कमल-भानु ! जो तव अनुसासन पावौं।
 का बापुरो पिनाकु, मेलि गुन मंदर मेरु नवावौं॥ 8॥
 देखौ निज किंकरको कौतुक, क्यों कोदंड चढ़ावौं।
 लै धावौं, भंजौं मृनाल, ज्यों, तौ प्रभु-अनुग कहावौं॥ 9॥
 हरषै पुर-नर-नारि, सचिव, नृप कुँवर कहे बर बैन।
 मृदु मुसुकाइ राम बरज्यौ प्रिय बंधु नयनकी सैन॥ 10॥
 कौसिक कहा, उठहु रघुनंदन, जगबंदन, बलऐन।
 तुलसिदास प्रभु चले मृगपति ज्यों निज भगतनि सुखदैन॥ 11॥

rāga mārū

(1/89)

sunō bhaiyā bhūpa sakala dai kāna.
 bajrarēkha gajadasana janaka-pana bēda-bidita, jaga jāna.. 1..
 ghōra kaṭhōra purāri-sarāsana, nāma prasid'dha pināku.
 jō dasakanṭha diyō bāmṣvōm, jēhi hara-giri kiyā hai manāku.. 2..
 bhūmi-bhāla bhrājata, na calata sō, jyōm birañcikō āmku.
 dhanu tōrai sō'i barai jānakī, rā'u hō'i ki rāmku.. 3..
 suni āmaraṣi uṭhē avanīpati, lagai bacana janu tīra.
 ṭarai na cāpa, karaim apanī sī mahā mahā baladhīra.. 4..
 namita-sīsa sōcahim salajja saba śrīhata bha'e sarīra.
 bōlē janaka bilōki sīya tana dukhita sarōṣa adhīra.. 5..
 sapta dīpa nava khaṇḍa bhūmikē bhūpatibṛm̐da jurē.
 baṛō lābha kan'yā-kīratikō, jaham-taham mahipa murē.. 6..
 ḍagyau na dhanu, janu bīra-bigata mahi, kidhaur̐m kahum̐ subhaṭa durē.
 rōṣē lakhana bikaṭa bhr̐kuṭī kari, bhuja aru adhara phurē.. 7..
 sunahu bhānukula-kamala-bhānu! jō tava anusāsana pāvaur̐m.
 kā bāpurō pināku, mēli guna mandara mēru navāvaur̐m.. 8..
 dēkhau nija kiñkarakō kautuka, kyōm kōdaṇḍa caṛhāvaur̐m.
 lai dhāvaur̐m, bhañjaur̐m mṛṇāla, jyōm, tau prabhu-anuga kahāvaur̐m.. 9..
 haraṣai pura-nara-nāri, saciva, nr̐pa kumvara kahē bara baina.
 mṛdu musukā'i rāma barajyau priya bandhu nayanakī saina.. 10..
 kausika kahyā, uṭhahu raghunandana, jagabandana, bala'aina.
 tulasidāsa prabhu calē mrgapati jyaur̐m nija bhagatani sukhadaina.. 11..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—1

Verse no. 1/89—[This verse serves to link the story to the previous verse no. 1/84. The intervening verse nos. 1/85—to 1/88 are a sort of interlude used to describe what happened on the sidelines of the main developments.]

The royal herelds declared on behalf of king Janak—‘Oh Brothers! Oh Princes! Please lend us your ears. King Janak's vow is final and as firm as being engraved on a stone (*bajrarēkha*) and etched on ivory (*gajadasana*). [That is, they can't be changed or rescinded.] It is famed in the Vedas and the world knows it (that Janak is very true to his words, and nothing in this world would make him go back on them)¹ (1).

[¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

The famed ‘Bow’ of *Purāri* (Lord Shiva), known by the name of ‘*Pināka*’, is extremely strong and hard. It humbled even the demon Ravana who could prove that the mighty mountain called Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) was of no consequence before him². [But the same Ravana, who could effortlessly lift the mighty mountain Kailash, did not summon enough courage to even try to lift the bow which obviously is very small as compared to the huge mountain.] (2).

[²Once, the demon king Ravana had asked Lord Shiva to come and stay at Lanka, the demon capital. But the Lord refused. So, determined to fulfill his wish, Ravana had scooped up the entire mountain Kailash where Shiva lives in the upper reaches of the Himalayas in his bid to plant the whole mountain at Lanka. The Gods were flabbergasted and shocked at this, so they devised a device whereby the Wind God and the Water God entered Ravana's abdomen, which resulted in a strong urge in him to urinate somewhere between the original location of Kailash and Lanka.

Now it so happened that at the time of lifting the mountain, Ravana had pledged that he will not place Mt. Kailash on the ground before reaching Lanka, and should he do so then he would not be able to lift it again. Taking advantage of this pre-condition, the two Gods, the Wind and Water Gods, created a situation whereby Ravana could no longer hold his urine, and putting Kailash at a secure place he went to relieve himself. But when he came back, the great mountain refused to budge. This immensely annoyed Ravana and in disgust he pushed the Shiva's Lingam with his big toe so hard that it sunk into the ground. It is believed that this insult that Ravana did to Shiva was the root cause of his fall and final death—because Shiva's eleventh form known as ‘*Rudra*’, the God of wrath and annihilation, assumed the form of Hanuman, the monkey warrior who led the charge of Lord Ram's army on Lanka that culminated in Ravana's death and defeat of the entire demon army.]

This bow is firmly established on the face of the earth as if it were the latter's crown (*bhūmi-bhāla bhrājata*). And even as it is most difficult to remove a king's crown from

his head, it is equally difficult to lift this bow from the ground (*na calata sō*). Verily, it is as unwavering and unmoving as the word of destiny written by the Creator (*na calata sō, jyōm birañcikō āmku*).

But nevertheless, whosoever—whether a king or pauper (*rā'u hō'i ki rāmku*)—breaks this remarkable Bow, he shall marry Janki (Sita, the daughter of Janak) (*dhanu tōrai sō'i barai jānakī*). [This is Janak's vow.]' (3).

Hearing this declaration, all the kings got up excitedly (*sunī āmaraṣi uṭhē avanīpati*); the words of Janak (as spoken through the heralds) pierced them like arrows (because they took it as a challenge to their manhood, valour and strength) (*lagai bacana janu tīra*).

All the great kings who were very strong, brave and gallant boasted and murmured about their valour and strength even as they puffed and panted and tried all the tricks they knew of in their attempt to move the formidable Bow (*karaiṁ apanī sī mahā mahā baladhīra*) which, however, refused to budge from its place even a fraction of a measurement (*ṭarai na cāpa*) (4)³.

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 251.]

Then they bowed their heads low in utter shame and humiliation; they were overwhelmed with regret and contrition (that they had taken the wrong decision to try to break the bow, and they would have been better off if they had exercised restraint and desisted from approaching the bow). Their faces were sore and sullen, having had their self-respect and dignity crushed to dust. All of them looked excessively gloomy, crestfallen, remorseful, depressed and dejected in the face of abject failure as if all the radiance associated with their majesty, their fame and their reputation, at their individual level as well as the level of their respective royal families, had been overshadowed by the dark shadow of defeat at the hands of the Bow (*namita-sīsa sōcahiṁ salajja saba śrīhata bha'e sarīra*)⁴.

At this moment, Janak looked pitifully at Sita; he was impatient, full of remorse as well as angry⁵ (*janaka bilōki sīya tana dukhita sarōṣa adhīra*).

Then he (Janak) said very angrily and in a sarcastic tone: 'Ah! The kings from the seven continents and nine parts of the globe have assembled here (*sapta dīpa nava khaṇḍa bhūmikē bhūpatibr̥mda jurē*). They could have had Sita in marriage along with the privilege of acquiring great fame and name for themselves, but they turned back humbly and meekly when opposed by the Bow (*barō lābha kan'yā-kīratikō, jaham̐-taham̐ mahipa murē*). [How incredulous is it! They who boasted of their matchless valour and gallantry a while ago are now sitting like punctured balloons, with darkened faces like the moon that has been eclipsed. Shame to all of you!]'⁶ (5-6).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 251.

⁵On whom was Janak angry? He was angry at himself because he alone was to blame for making such a stern vow without weighing its pros and cons, and without devising any alternate device as a back-up. Even a most optimistic of king would always have some or the other plans ready for facing contingencies, and it was not expected that Janak, known for his wisdom and farsight, to neglect it.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.]

None of you could move the bow even by a fraction (ḍagyau na dhanu). It seemeth that the earth has been rendered without those who are truly brave, strong and powerful (janu bīra-bigata mahi). Or is it that all the brave ones have hidden somewhere underground (kidhaum̐ kahum̐ subhaṭa durē)?

Hearing these sarcastic and scornful words of Janak, Laxman was full of resentment and anger, and his arms and lips began to tremble and flutter (because he was terribly excited and wished to give befitting retort to Janak) (7).

[Addressing Lord Sri Ram, Laxman thundered—] ‘Oh the sun for the lotus-like Sun-race (bhānukula-kamala-bhānu)⁷! Listen! If I get your orders now, what to talk of this poor and wretched old worn-out Bow (kā bāpurō pināku), I can string the mountains called Mandrachal and Sumeru and pull them down and bend them (mēli guna mandara mēru navāvaum̐)! (8).

[⁷Sri Ram belongs to the Sun-race, while the first ‘sun’ refers to the visible sun in the sky which causes the lotus flower to open its petals as soon as it appears. Tulsidas is playing with words here. He means that even as the lotus flower blooms when the sun rises, the great family of the noble ancient king Raghu has attained its fame and glory with the advent of Lord Ram as one of its descendents and members.]

Just have a look at the wonderful game that I, your humble servant, can play by stringing this Bow (dēkhau nija kiṅkarakō kautuka).

Not only this, I will run with it and snap it like it were the stem of the lotus plant (kyōm̐ kōdaṇḍa caṛhāvaum̐. lai dhāvaum̐, bhaṇjaur̐ mṛṇāla, jyōm̐)—then only would I qualify to be called your ‘Daas’ (literally, a devoted servant, an obedient servitor, but here meaning your ardent follower and subordinate—tau prabhu-anuga kahāvaum̐)’ (9)⁸.

[⁸Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/85; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Doha no. 253.]

Hearing these stern words of Laxman, the inhabitants of the city, males and females as well as ministers and the king (Janak) himself, were all extremely glad and satisfied because they approved of what he said and were happy that finally, after a long wait, what they had all along wished appears to be coming true. So they unanimously said, ‘The prince (Laxman) has said appropriate words (nrpa kum̐vara kahē bara baina).’

But Sri Ram smiled sweetly and signalled his dear brother with his eyes to stop his diatribes and calm down (10)⁹.

[⁹Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/85, stanza no. 3; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 254.]

Then Vishwamitra said, ‘Oh the great Son of Raghu’s family (raghunandana; Lord Sri Ram) who is revered by the whole world (jagabandana), and is an abode of immeasurable strength and valour (bala'aina)! Get up (uṭṭhahu)¹⁰!’

Tulsidas says that at this (express command of the sage), Lord Sri Ram moved forward majestically like a lion (mrgapati, literally, “like the king of animals”, a metaphor that means that Lord Ram moved towards the bow fearlessly, confidently and boldly in an elegant style befitting a great prince of high noble pedigree, and one who has learnt all the finesses and etiquettes to be observed during public appearances and ceremonies)¹¹ (11).

[¹⁰Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/85, stanza no. 4; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 254.

An important point to note here is that Vishwamitra has ordered Lord Ram to “get up”, but not to “get up, go and break the bow”. Well, it is absolutely obvious that the sage meant it, and no explicitness was needed to tell Ram about something that was as stark clear.

¹¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 255. Here, the majestic style of Lord Ram’s way of walking is compared to that of a huge ‘elephant’ in rut (matta manju bara kunjara).]

(1 / 90)

जबहिं सब नृपति निरास भए ।
 गुरुपद-कमल बंदि रघुपति तब चाप-समीप गए ॥ 1 ॥
 स्याम-तामरस-दाम-बरन बपु, उर-भुज-नयन बिसाल ।
 पीत बसन कटि, कलित कंठ सुंदर सिंधुर-मनिमाल ॥ 2 ॥
 कल कुंडल, पल्लव प्रसून सिर चारु चौतनी लाल ।
 कोटि-मदन-छबि-सदन बदन-बिधु, तिलक मनोहर भाल ॥ 3 ॥
 रूप अनूप बिलोकत सादर पुरजन राजसमाज ।
 लषन कह्यो थिर होहु धरनिधरु, धरनि, धरनिधर आज ॥ 4 ॥
 कमठ, कोल, दिग-दंति सकल अँग सजग करहु प्रभु-काज ।
 चहत चपरि सिव-चाप चढ़ावन दसरथको जुबराज ॥ 5 ॥
 गहि करतल, मुनि-पुलक सहित कौतुकहि, उठाइ लियो ।
 नृपगन-मुखिन समेत नमित करि सजि सुख सबहि जियो ॥ 6 ॥
 आकरष्यो सिय-मन समेत हरि, हरष्यो जनक-हियो ।
 भंज्यो भृगुपति-गरब सहित, तिहुँ लोक-बिमोह कियो ॥ 7 ॥
 भयो कठिन कोदंड-कोलाहल प्रलय-पयोद समान ।
 चौंके सिव, बिरंचि, दिसिनायक, रहे मूँदि कर कान ॥ 8 ॥
 सावधान है चढ़े बिमाननि चले बजाइ निसान ।
 उमगि चलयौ आनंद नगर, नभ जयधुनि, मंगलगान ॥ 9 ॥
 बिप्र-बचन सुनि सुखी सुआसिनि चलीं जानकिहि ल्याइ ।

कुँवर निरखि, जयमाल मेलि उर कुँवरि रही सकुचाइ ॥10॥
 बरषहिं सुमन, असीसहिं सुर-मुनि, प्रेम न हृदय समाइ ।
 सीय-रामकी सुंदरतापर तुलसिदास बलि जाइ ॥11॥

(1/90)

jabahim̐ saba nr̥pati nirāsa bha'ē.
 gurupada-kamala bandi raghupati taba cāpa-samīpa ga'ē.. 1..
 syāma-tāmarasa-dāma-barana bapu, ura-bhuja-nayana bisāla.
 pīta basana kaṭi, kalita kaṇṭha sundara sindhura-manimāla.. 2..
 kala kuṇḍala, pallava prasūna sira cāru cautani lāla.
 kōṭi-madana-chabi-sadana badana-bidhu, tilaka manōhara bhāla.. 3..
 rūpa anūpa bilōkata sādara purajana rājasamāja.
 laṣana kahyō thira hōhu dharanidharu, dharani, dharanidhara āja.. 4..
 kamaṭha, kōla, diga-danti sakala am̐ga sajaga karahu prabhu-kāja.
 cahata capari siva-cāpa caṛhāvana dasarathakō jubarāja.. 5..
 gahi karatala, muni-pulaka sahita kautukahi, uṭhā'i liyō.
 nr̥pagana-mukhina samēta namita kari saji sukha sabahi jiyō.. 6..
 ākaraṣyō siya-mana samēta hari, haraṣyō janaka-hiyō.
 bhañjyō bhr̥gupati-garaba sahita, tihum̐ lōka-bimōha kiyō.. 7..
 bhayō kaṭhina kōdaṇḍa-kōlāhala pralaya-payōda samāna.
 cauṅkē siva, biran̐ci, disināyaka, rahē mūm̐di kara kāna.. 8..
 sāvadhāna hvai caṛhē bimānani calē bajā'i nisāna.
 umagi calyau ānanda nagara, nabha jayadhuni, maṅgalagāna.. 9..
 bipra-bacana suni sukhī su'āsini calim̐ jānakihi lyā'i.
 kum̐vara nirakhi, jayamāla mēli ura kum̐vari rahī sakucā'i..10..
 baraṣahim̐ sumana, asīahim̐ sura-muni, prēma na hr̥daya samā'i.
 sīya-rāmaki sundaratāpara tulasidāsa bali jā'i..11..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—2

Verse no. 1/90—At the time when all the assembled kings had given up all hopes, Lord Sri Raghupati (Ram) paid his obeisance at the lotus-like feet of his Guru (Vishwamitra) and approached the bow (1).

His (Sri Ram's) body is dark complexioned like a garland of blue lotuses. His chest, arms and eyes are broad and well-built. He has a Pitambar (which is a yellow length of silk cloth) wrapped around his waist, and an attractive necklace of Gajmukta (a secretion of subcutaneous glands on the head of elephants; considered very rare and of immense value, and it resembles natural pearls) in his beautiful neck (2).

There are lovely ear-rings in the Lord's ears, while a red coloured cap and red flowers adorn his head (that resemble a crown studded with red gems). The Lord's countenance is

like that of a full moon, for verily it is an abode or a refuge for the beauty and glamour associated with millions of Kamdeo/cupids (who is the patron god of these qualities). At the same time, there is also a charming Tilak Mark on his forehead (which is a mark consisting of parallel lines drawn by chalk on the forehead by higher castes) which adds to the magnificence of the Lord's pretty face (3).

The denizens of the city and the whole assembly of kings are mesmerised by this wonderful view of the Lord as they watch him affectionately and with reverence in their hearts.

At this moment (when it was sure that the time had come for Lord Ram to break the formidable Bow of Shiva), Laxman alerted all the concerned entities (such as the 'earth' with all its 'mountains', as well as all others who supported the earth, such as 'Seshnath', 'Kurma', 'Varaaha', 'Diggaj' etc., to be ready for the shock waves that would be generated when the Bow snapped, and to ensure that the earth did not crack or sink into the chasm of the nether world). He stoutly ordered everyone concerned to girdle up and be ready.

Hence, Laxman ordered them as follows[@]: 'Oh Sheshnath ('dharanidharu'; the legendary celestial serpent who holds the earth from below on its thousands of hoods), Oh Earth (dharani) and Mountains (dharanidhara)¹! Become steady and hold fast today so that you do not tremble and shiver due to huge shock waves that would be created once the mighty Bow is broken! [Please ensure that you do not move from your present position, otherwise the whole world would sink in the bowls of nowhere as if a mighty earthquake had obliterated the face of earth.] (4).

[[@]Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/92, stanza no. 1 herein below; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.

¹There are three words used in the text, viz. dharanidharu, dharani, dharanidhara. Now, this is very clever use of words on the part of Tulsidas. The earth (dharani) and its mountains are supported from below on the thousand hoods of Lord Seshnath, the legendary celestial serpent who also happens to be the one on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshirsagar. The word 'dharanidhara' has a dual meaning: viz. it means 'one which holds the earth', and 'one who is supported by the earth'. Therefore, it refers to Seshnath who holds the earth from below, and also to the mountains that are supported by the earth itself.

The word 'dharanidharu' again has a dual use. One, it means 'hold the earth' as a verb, and two, 'the one who holds the earth' as a noun.

Hence, Laxman has ordered Seshnath to hold the earth and its mountains so firmly on its hoods that they do not sink into the void of the cosmos due to the shock of the breaking of the Bow. At the same time, he has warned Earth to firmly grip the mountains so that they don't crack and cause a disastrous avalanche or a rain of rocks being flung like missiles in all the directions of the earth which would obliterate large swathes of living population upon whom they fall. He has also warned the Mountains to remain firm where they are, and exercise a firmer grip on their base, the earth.]

Oh Tortoise (*kamaṭha*)! Oh Boar (*kōla*)! Oh Diggajs (*diga-danti*)²! Be alert and help fulfill the Lord's work. The prince of Dasrath (Sri Ram) wishes to lift and string the bow of Lord Shiva right now (so be alert and ensure that no hindrance is created).' (5).

[²The 'Tortoise' and the 'Boar' are said to be incarnations of Lord Vishnu in some ancient time when the Lord protected the earth from sinking into the void of the fathomless cosmos.

As the 'Tortoise' the earth was supported by the Lord on the former's hard outer shell when the ocean was being churned by the demons and the gods in search for Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity.

As the 'Boar' the Lord had retrieved the earth from the ocean where it was hidden by a demon named Hiranyaaksha.

The 'Diggaj' are a group of mystical elephants who support the weight of the earth from its eight corners or directions—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west and north-west.]

Then he (Lord Sri Ram) created thrill of joy and ecstasy among the sages, hermits and seers (*muni-pulaka sahita*) as he caught hold of that Bow effortlessly as if playing with it (like it were a toy; '*kautukahi uṭhā'i liyō*'), and then bent the Bow even as the assembled kings and princes too bent or drooped or lowered their heads in shame and defeat (*nrpagana-mukhina samēta namita kari*)³.

Verily, this single act of the Lord was the cause of immense joy and pleasure for all those assembled there (*saji sukha sabahi jiyō*)⁴ (6).

[³The kings and princes who had been defeated in their effort to break the bow were on their edge, expecting that Lord Ram would also fail like them. They were craning their heads and on the verge of rejoicing should the Lord fail. But as it haply happened, the Lord easily lifted the bow and bent it so much that it finally snapped with a thunderous roar. And as soon as this happened, the craned necks of the jealous kings and princes suddenly drooped just like the bent stem of a creeper that loses its grip on a tree's branch and dangles flaccidly earthwards. The bending of the bow and the drooping of the necks of the kings happened almost simultaneously. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263.

⁴On the other hand, the rest of the assembly erupted in joy. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.]

Thereafter, Sri Hari (i.e. Lord Sri Ram who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is known as 'Hari') extracted or extricated the Bow's strength unto himself even as he attracted and enthralled the heart of Sita (whose mind and heart were riveted on the Lord)⁵. (*ākaraṣyō siya-mana samēta hari*).

This marvellous development cheered the heart of Janak immensely (for this was what he had wanted but was hesitant to express for fear of being accused of changing his words and showing favouritism) (*haraṣyō janaka-hiyō*)⁶.

On this wise, Lord Ram broke the Bow which also coincided with the trouncing of sage Parashuram's haughtiness and arrogance (*bhanjyō bhrigupati-garaba sahita*)⁷.

This happy development whereby the Lord had broken the Bow caused all the three divisions of the world (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world) to be freed of

grief and consternations of uncertainties and dilemmas (‘tīhum⁵ lōka-bimōha kiyō’; that is, once the Bow broke, everyone felt very happy and exceedingly joyous, and all uncertainties and doubts were laid to rest) (7).

[⁵Lord Ram ‘pulled the string of Bow’ as a symbolic gesture to imply that he is at once ‘pulling’ towards himself both the strength and majesty of the Bow as well as the heart and mind of Sita. The Bow had no regrets by getting broken at the hands of Lord Ram as it was aware that he was none but Lord Vishnu. And Sita was exhilarated as her boon was granted.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263.

⁷Parashuram was a very haughty and arrogant sage. He had become very angry upon learning that someone had broken the Bow of Lord Shiva as he was Shiva’s great devotee. So he immediately rushed to the venue with his battle-axe to avenge this imaginary insult to Shiva and was determined to punish the culprit. At the venue he threw a lot of tantrums and was firmly rebuked by Laxman. No matter how hard Parashuram tried, his hands could not lift themselves to wield the axe on either Laxman or Lord Ram, something that vexed Parashuram himself as this was the first time in his life that his hands and his axe did not obey his will. So after the initial shouting and huffing and puffing angrily, he was forced to think over the matter because surely something was seriously amiss. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280.

Finally, he realised who Lord Ram and Laxman actually were, and so he immediately cooled down and prayed to the Lord begging for forgiveness. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

At the instant the formidably hard Bow broke, there was a thunderous roar like the tumult created by cloud burst at the time of dooms-day (bhayō kaṭhina kōdaṇḍa-kōlāhala pralaya-payōda samāna).

Even the creator Lord Brahma and the concluder Lord Shiva (the two great Gods of the Trinity), along with all the Dikpals (i.e. all other custodians of the world) were so startled and shocked by this noise that they closed their ears (cauṅkē siva, birañci, disināyaka, rahē mūṁdi kara kāna)⁸ (8).

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 261.]

Recovering their composure and gathering their wits immediately thereafter, they became exuberant (as they realised that their cherished dream of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying Sita has been fulfilled). So all of them mounted their vehicles and departed joyously and in merriment from the site, playing their musical drums and trumpets enthusiastically. Ecstasy, jubilation and euphoria overflowed and swept across the entire city (of Janakpur), while felicitous songs and thunderous choruses of applause resonated in the sky⁹ (9).

[⁹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263.]

Thereafter, the virtuous handmaids, lady friends and other chaste women of the palace, upon hearing the command of Brahmins (the learned elders), brought Sita there (at the place where Lord Ram stood after breaking the bow). At that moment, the princess (Sita) put the victory garland around the neck of the prince (Sri Ram), and thereafter stood there hesitantly¹⁰ (10).

[¹⁰Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 263—to Doha no. 264.]

Then the Gods and sages rained (showered) flowers from the sky and began to bless the couple liberally. Love and affection (as well as merriment, joy, ecstasy and happiness) was so immense that they could not be accommodated or contained in their hearts (and therefore it overflowed and spilled over). [In other words, the Gods and sages and other holy Ones were so exceedingly glad and jubilant that no matter how much they blessed the divine couple and showered flowers on them, they felt that they hadn't had enough of it.]

Tulsidas sacrifices himself (i.e. he is euphoric, highly pleased and feels exceptionally privileged) at that beauteous and divine sight of Sri Ram and Sita standing together, a sight of exceeding magnificence and charm¹¹ (11).

[¹¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

राग मलार

(1/91)

जब दोउ दसरथ—कुँवर बिलोके ।
जनक नगर नर—नारि मुदित मन निरखि नयन पल रोके ॥ 1 ॥
बय किसोर, घन—तड़ित—बरन तनु नखसिख अंग लोभारे ।
दै चित, कै हित, लै सब छबि—बित बिधि निज हाथ सँवारे ॥ 2 ॥
संकट नृपहि, सोच अति सीतहि, भूप सकुचि सिर नाए ।
उठे राम रघुकुल—कुल—केहरि, गुर—अनुसासन पाए ॥ 3 ॥
कौतुक ही कोदंड खंडि प्रभु, जय अरु जानकि पाई ।
तुलसिदास कीरति रघुपतिकी मुनिन्ह तिहूँ पुर गाई ॥ 4 ॥

rāga malāra

(1/91)

jaba dō'u dasaratha-kumvara bilōkē.

janaka nagara nara-nāri mudita mana nirakhi nayana pala rōkē.. 1..

baya kisōra, ghana-taḍita-barana tanu nakhasikha aṅga lōbhārē.

dai cita, kai hita, lai saba chabi-bita bidhi nija hātha samvārē.. 2..
 saṅkaṭa nṛpahi, sōca ati sītahi, bhūpa sakuci sira nā'ē.
 uṭhē rāma raghukula-kula-kēhari, gura-anusāsana pā'ē.. 3..
 kautuka hī kōdaṇḍa khaṇḍi prabhu, jaya aru jānaki pā'ī.
 tulasidāsa kīrati raghupatikī muninha tihūṁ pura gā'ī.. 4..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—3

Verse no. 1/91—[This verse summarises the part of the story from the time the citizens of Janakpur first saw Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman, till the time Lord Ram broke the Bow.]

When the men and women folk of Janakpur saw the two princes (Lord Ram and Laxman), they became so enchanted, exhilarated, spellbound and happy that they stopped blinking their eyelids (*nirakhi nayana pala rōkē*), and gazed at the two brothers as if mesmerised by their sight (1).

They (Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) were in their teens, and had complexions resembling a dark cloud and lightening respectively¹.

Every organ of their bodies, from the tip of the toe to the tuft of hair on the head, were of perfect form, being proportionate, fabulously charming and worthy to be beheld, and verily it seemeth that the Creator had collected all the best of qualities of beauty and charm and magnificence present wheresoever in creation, and then he had employed all his craftsmanship and skills diligently with dedication and sincerity of mind and heart as he moulded the fine forms of the two princes to finesse and perfection (2).

(Torn between his vows and affection for Sri Ram) The king (Janak) was in a terrible state of uncertainty and dilemma (because he could not rescind on his words at this late hour but internally he wished that Lord Ram weds his daughter Sita).

Sita was very dismayed, being hesitant and exceedingly uneasy (because she wasn't able to express her views though it is her future that was at stake).

The assembled kings were sitting with a bowed head in utter shame and rejection (because they had failed to move the bow and had invited ridicule and insult on themselves, besides realising that now if Lord Ram breaks the bow then it would be the climax of their humiliation and disgrace, and all their claim to fame and majesty would be crushed in front of the whole assembly where all the high and mighty had gathered together, an eventuality that would be worse than death itself).

At this juncture, getting the permission (or orders) of his Guru (Vishwamitra), Lord Ram who was the most valiant lion of king Raghu's race (*rāma raghukula-kula-kēhari*) got up from his seat (to go and break the bow) (3).

The Lord playfully and effortlessly broke the bow, and thereby not only acquired immense fame and glory but also the hand of Sita in marriage.

Tulsidas declares that the fame and glory of Sri Raghupati (*kīrati raghupatikī*; i.e. Lord Sri Ram) has been sung by the sages and seers down the ages and times in the

three worlds (i.e. the whole creation consisting of the celestial, terrestrial and subterranean worlds) (4).

राग टोड़ी

(1/92)

मुनि—पदरेनु रघुनाथ माथे धरी है।
 रामरुख निरखि लषनकी रजाइ पाइ,
 धरा धरा—धरनि सुसावधान करी है॥ 1॥
 सुमिरि गनेस—गुर, गौरि—हर भूमिसुर,
 सोचत सकोचत सकोची बानि धरी है।
 दीनबंधु, कृपासिंधु साहसिक, सीलसिंधु,
 सभाको सकोच कुलहूकी लाज परी है॥ 2॥
 पेखि पुरुषार्थ, परखि पन, पेम, नेम,
 सिय—हियकी बिसेषि बड़ी खरभरी है।
 दाहिनो दियो पिनाकु, सहमि भयो मनाकु,
 महाब्याल बिकल बिलोकि जनु जरी है॥ 3॥
 सुर हरषत, बरषत फूल बार बार,
 सिद्ध—मुनि कहत, सगुन, सुभ घरी है।
 राम बाहु—बिटप बिसाल बौड़ी देखियत,
 जनक—मनोरथ कलपबेलि फरी है॥ 4॥
 लख्यो न चढ़ावत, न तानत, न तोरत हू,
 घोर धुनि सुनि सिवकी समाधि तरी है।
 प्रभु चरित चारु तुलसी सुनत सुख,
 एक ही सुलाभ सबहीकी हानि हरी है॥ 5॥

rāga ṭōṛī

(1/92)

muni-padarēnu raghunātha māthē dharī hai.
 rāmarukha nirakhi laṣanakī rajā'i pā'i,
 dharā dharā-dharani susāvadhāna karī hai.. 1..
 sumiri ganēsa-gura, gauri-hara bhūmisura,
 sōcata sakōcata sakōcī bāni dharī hai.
 dīnabandhu, kṛpāsindhu sāhasika, sīlasindhu,
 sabhākō sakōca kulahūkī lāja parī hai.. 2..
 pēkhi puruṣāratha, parakhi pana, pēma, nēma,
 siya-hiyakī bisēṣi barī kharabharī hai.
 dāhinō diyō pināku, sahami bhayō manāku,
 mahābyāla bikala bilōki janū jarī hai.. 3..

sura haraṣata, baraṣata phūla bāra bāra,
 sid'dha-muni kahata, saguna, subha gharī hai.
 rāma bāhu-biṭapa bisāla baṇṇī dēkhiyata,
 janaka-manōratha kalapabēli pharī hai.. 4..
 lakhyō na caṛhāvata, na tānata, na tōrata hū,
 ghōra dhuni suni sivakī samādhi ṭarī hai.
 prabhu carita cāru tulasī sunata sukha,
 ēka hī sulābha sabahīkī hāni harī hai.. 5..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—4

Verse no. 1/92—When the opportune and appropriate moment came, Lord Ram put the dust of sage Vishwamitra's feet to his head (as a token of seeking his blessings and ensuring success in the endeavour he was about to undertake, i.e. breaking of the bow)¹.

At the instructions of Laxman, the mother Earth asked her bearers² to beware (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254.

²Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza nos. 4-5 herein above; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.

Laxman was a manifestation of the legendary celestial serpent known as 'Sheshnath' who is said to hold the earth on its hood. So Laxman requested his assistants such as the Tortoise, the Boar and the Diggajs who were holding the earth to be ready and vigilant because as soon as Lord Ram would break the heavy bow there would be thunderous roar, and this could terrify them, and if either they trembled or the vibrations produced by the terrific sound waves would shake the earth then the earth could topple over and cause a doomsday scenario, something that was not to be done now.]

Janki (Sita, the daughter of Janak) was exceedingly worried and perplexed. She fervently prayed mentally to Lord Ganesh, her Guru Satanand, Goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva and an assortment of other holy men (seeking their blessings and intervention to help in this crucial and most important moment of her life)³.

She also prayed mentally to Lord Ram, saying fervently but silently—'You are extolled as being an ocean of mercy and compassion, of being a friend of the distressed, of being brave and courageous, and of being graceful and kind. I am facing a fearful dilemma and passing through the vilest moment of my life in the face of the formidable Bow and the rigid vows of my father. What can I do? (Wouldn't you, Lord Ram the Compassionate One, the Merciful One, the Friend of the distressed and the Companion of the lonely, come to my aide now, for it is either now or never!)⁴' (2).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 257 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 258, and Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 259.

Sita seemed to say that she has no choice of her own as she is shackled by the established norms of the society and tradition, and therefore she can't come out in the

open to declare her unequivocal decision to marry none else but Lord Ram, irrespective of who broke the bow and what her father had or had not declared. After all, it's her future and life, and no one had ever given her a chance to air her views.

The all-knowing Lord Ram must understand her situation, and therefore he shouldn't waste a moment in breaking the bow lest any last minute hitch crops up from nowhere. So, wouldn't he step forward and break the bow for her sake immediately, without further procrastination?]

At that moment, Lord Sri Ram—having observed the boastful pretention of valour of the assembled kings and princes ('pēkhi puruṣāratha'; and also realizing that they were very jealous and edgy and restless to create a nasty ruckus at the last moment to take revenge for their defeat and humiliatio), and keeping in mind the vow of king Janak (that he was bound to marry Sita to anyone whosoever breaks the Bow, and not otherwise—*parakhi pana*), and also realizing the high level of devotion and faith that Sita had towards himself and the way she was suffering as if being burnt by a severe fire spewed by a huge python (*pēma, nēma, siya-hiyakī bisēṣi barī kharabharī hai; mahābyāla bikala bilōki janu jarī hai#*)—circled the Bow ('dāhinō diyō pināku'; i.e. he went round the Bow in a clock-wise manner to circumambulate in order to pay his due respect and obeisance to it because it was the Bow of Lord Shiva).

At this graceful gesture of the Lord, it appeared that the Bow felt shy and humble, and it shrank in size as well as reduced itself in weight as if a huge python retracts itself when it sights some herb or plant that could be the cause of its death should the former touch the latter (*sahami bhayō manāku, mahābyāla bikala bilōki janu jarī hai#*) (3).

[#The phrase "*mahābyāla bikala bilōki janu jarī hai*" applies to Sita as well as to the Bow. Both suffered—Sita was suffering hugely from her worries and uncertain future and wondering what would happen to her if this final chance of Lord Ram breaking the Bow is lost, while the Bow was worried and fearful that though it had trounced the pride and strength of all the kings who had tried to dismember it till now but finally its nemesis in the form of Lord Ram has arrived and the Bow knew it can't survive now. The word "*mahābyāla*" refers to a huge python or snake; "*jarī*" means 'to burn' as well as 'a herb or plant with medicinal value', while "*bikala*" means to be tormented and be in great pain and restlessness.]

Seeing this, all the Gods became joyous with merriment even as they ceaselessly showered flowers (from the sky on the venue, and upon Lord Ram).

The mystics as well as the sages and seers who were experts in their fields (*sid'dha-muni*) unanimously said that the time and occasion were most auspicious and appropriate (*saguna, subha gharī hai*).

It appears that the wish of Janak is like a symbolic creeper that has finally sprouted new leaves and borne fruits by the virtue of it having found the support and strength of a huge tree symbolized by Lord Ram's strength-of-arms and valour⁵ (4).

[⁵A creeper has no strength of its own to stand and grow and spread; it relies on the trunk and branches of a strong tree to sustain its self. In the present case, Janak's vows are compared to the 'creeper', Lord Ram's strength-of-arm to the 'tree', and the fact that the Lord is about to break the bow and fulfill Janak's vows to the 'creeper

bearing leaves and fruits': "rāma bāhu-biṭapa bisāla baṇṇī dēkhiyata, janaka-manōratha kalapabēli pharī hai"]

No one could see Lord Ram lifting, stringing and breaking that formidable Bow (i.e. it was done very swiftly and within such a short time that no one could differentiate between the time the Lord touched, lifted, stringed and broke the bow by pulling hard at it)⁶.

The thunderous crashing sound of its snapping broke the meditative posture of Lord Shiva⁷.

Tulsidas says that all felt exceedingly happy and jubilant on hearing about this marvellous deed of Lord Ram. [Though the sound was ear-splitting, but it created joy in the hearts of all instead of making them terrified and scared. It was something welcome and to be rejoiced, something for which every soul was eagerly and anxiously waiting. So there was an instant tumult—one cause by the breaking of the bow, and the other caused by instantaneous celebrations.] (5).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 261.

⁷The immensity of the shock waves produced by the breaking of the bow and the thunderous sound equivalent to the roar heard at the time of doomsday has been beautifully described in Tulsidas' another book called "Kavitawali", in its Baal Kand, verse no. 11, as well as in "Ram Charit Manas", Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 261.]

राग सारंग

(1 / 93)

राम कामरिपु—चाप चढ़ायो ।
मुनिहि पुलक, आनंद नगर, नभ निरखि निसान बजायो ॥ 1 ॥
जेहि पिनाक बिनु नाक किए नृप, सबहि बिषाद बढ़ायो ।
सोइ प्रभु कर परसत दूट्यो, जनु हुतो पुरारि पढ़ायो ॥ 2 ॥
पहिराई जयमाल जानकी, जुबतिन्ह मंगल गायो ।
तुलसी सुमन बरषि हरषे सुर, सुजस तिहू पुर छायो ॥ 3 ॥

rāga sārāṅga

(1/93)

rāma kāmariṇi-pu-cāpa caṛhāyō.
munihi pulaka, ānanda nagara, nabha nirakhi nisāna bajāyō.. 1..
jēhi pināka binu nāka ki'ē nṛpa, sabahi biṣāda baṛhāyō.
sō'i prabhu kara parasata ṭūṭyō, janu hutō purārī paṛhāyō.. 2..
pahirā'ī jayamāla jānakī, jubatinha maṅgala gāyō.

tulasī sumana baraṣi haraṣē sura, sujasa tihū pura chāyō.. 3..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—5

Verse no. 1/93—At the moment when Lord Sri Ram strung Kāmaripu’s Bow (i.e. the Bow belonging to Lord Shiva, the Lord who is had vanquished Kamdeo, the god of lust and passion¹), the sage (Vishwamitra) was thrilled, happiness and joy spread over the whole city (of Janakpur), and the Gods saw all this (from the heavens) and played their musical instruments in the sky (in anticipation, because they knew that the moment for celebrations has arrived as it was pre-destined that Lord Ram would break the Bow)² (1).

[¹Once it so happened that Kamdeo had tried to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva at the behest of the Gods who wanted Shiva to marry Parvati who had done severe austerity to have the Lord as her husband, and also because the son produced by this union would be the only one able to kill the fierce demon Tarkaasur. But Shiva became so angry at Kamdeo that he opened his ‘third eye’ that spewed fire which reduced Kamdeo to ashes. However, when Rati, the wife of Kamdeo, approached Shiva for mercy and restore her husband, the Lord granted her wish and said that henceforth Kamdeo would live in an invisible form as passion and lust that are natural to all living beings, and his abode would be in the creature’s heart. He also assured Rati that in his next birth, her husband would be the son of Lord Krishna and then she would be able to marry him once again in physical terms.

Since Kamdeo had tried in vain to fight with Shiva in his attempt to overcome the latter’s defiance and self-restraint, and then Shiva had burnt him to ashes in his anger, it is said that ‘Shiva is an enemy of Kamdeo’. From higher spiritual and metaphysical perspective it means that Shiva is the only Lord in the pantheon of Gods who has the self-restraint to overcome such nature inclinations of all living entities as passion and lust and longing for enjoyments.

This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

²Refer also to: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/94, stanza no. 2; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 265 also.]

The Bow known as ‘Pināka’ which had virtually “cut-off the nose” (binu nāka ki’ē; a symbolic way of subjecting someone to derision, insult, abject humiliation, ignominy and surrender) of all the assembled kings and princes, and had enhanced their sense of torment that came with shame and humiliation (‘sabahi biṣāda barḥāyō’) when none of them could move the Bow even a fraction of measurement when they tried to lift it individually as well as jointly—verily it was the same relentless Bow that now broke as soon as Lord Ram touched it with his hands (sō’i prabhu kara parasata ṭūṭyō) as if its lord and master, Lord Purari (Shiva), had taught it to do so (janu hutō purāri parḥāyō)! (2).

Thereafter, Sita offered him (Lord Sri Ram) the 'Jaimal' (the garland of victory) while the ladies accompanying her as well as others in the assembly sang auspicious and congratulatory songs.

Tulsidas says that the Gods felt extremely exhilarated and showered flowers from the sky to celebrate the occasion. This marvellous and magnificent deed of the Lord spread and established his glory, fame and majesty over the whole world consisting of three divisions (i.e. celestial, terrestrial, subterranean) (3)³.

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 264—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

राग टोड़ी

(1 / 94)

जनक मुदित मन टूटत पिनाकके ।
 बाजे हैं बधावने, सुहावने मंगल-गान,
 भयो सुख एकरस रानी राजा रौंकके ॥ 1 ॥
 दुंदुभी बाजइ, गाइ हरषि बरषि फूल,
 सुरगन नाचै नाच नायकहू नाकके ।
 तुलसी महीस देखे दिन रजनीस जैसे,
 सूने परे सून-से मनो मिटाए आँकके ॥ 2 ॥

rāga ṭōṛī

(1/94)

janaka mudita mana ṭūṭata pinākakē.
 bājē hair̥m badhāvanē, suhāvanē maṅgala-gāna,
 bhayō sukha ēkarasa rānī rājā rām̐kakē.. 1..
 dundubhī bāja'i, gā'i haraṣi baraṣi phūla,
 suragana nācair̥m nāca nāyakahū nākakē.
 tulasī mahīsa dēkhē dina rajanīsa jaisē,
 sūnē parē sūna-sē manō miṭā'ē āṁkakē.. 2..

The Bow-breaking Ceremony—6

Verse no. 1/94—As soon as the Bow broke, Janak became extremely happy. As a result and immediately thereafter, congratulatory ceremonies started in right earnest with the enthusiastic playing of pleasant ceremonial music and singing of auspicious songs everywhere. At that time, everyone celebrated—whether the be a king, a queen, a prince

or a pauper, everyone felt exuberant and exhilarated with joy exceeding and happiness unbound¹ (1).

[¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263; and (ii) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 14, stanza no. 1.]

Even the Gods and other lords of the heavens (such as the Gandharvas, Kinnars, Dikpaals etc.) showered flowers, sounded their kettle-drums and trumpets, and singing merrily, they began to dance in ecstasy².

Tulsidas observes that the assembled kings (who had attempted to break the Bow but had dismally failed) resembled a moon during the day time ('mahīsa dēkhē dina rajanīsa³ jaisē'; i.e. they became exceedingly shameful and lost all their claim to dignity and majesty; all their sense of pride and royalty were overshadowed by defeat just like the moon loses its shine under the glare of the sun's brilliant light during the day).

These kings appeared to be like the digit 'zero' after removal of numerals that precede it ('sūnē parē sūna-sē manō miṭā'ē āmkakē'; i.e. they became reduced to nothing, lost all their worth, dignity and glory, were greatly depressed and demoted, and were inconsequential as the zero itself) (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262; Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 265.

³The reader should observe how clever Tulsidas is with the use of words. He has used the word "rajanīsa" for the failed kings. This word means 'the king of the night', and refers to the 'moon' which rules the night sky and lords over the millions of stars that dot the realm of the night sky. Just like a king who occupies a special position surrounded by his knights, grandees, lords, nobles, ministers, courtiers etc., the moon too occupies a special place in the night sky surrounded by the stars.

But for all its radiance and majesty displayed during the night, the moon becomes a non-entity once the sun rises at dawn. Its shine begins to fade by the hour, and a time comes when it completely becomes invisible when the sun has risen in the sky for some distance. This metaphor has been employed by poet Tulsidas to highlight that as soon as Lord Ram rose to break the bow, and then when he actually broke the bow, all the competing kings and princes became lustre-less and gloomy, burying their heads in their hands in shame and ignominy, like the moon during the day time.]

(1 / 95)

लाज तोरि, साजि साज राजा राढ़ रोषे हैं ।
 कहा भौ चढ़ाए चाप, ब्याह है है बड़े खाए,
 बोलैं, खोलैं सेल, असि चमकत चोखे हैं ॥ 1 ॥
 जानि पुरजन त्रसे, धीर दै लषन हँसे,
 बल इनको पिनाक नीके नापे—जोखे हैं ।
 कुलहि लजावैं बाल, बालिस बजावैं गाल,
 कैधौ कूर कालबस, तमकि त्रिदोषे हैं ॥ 2 ॥
 कुँवर चढ़ाई भौहैं, अब को बिलोकै सोहैं,

जहँ तहँ भे अचेत, खेतके—से धोखे हैं ।
 देखे नर—नारि कहैं, साग खाइ जाए माइ,
 बाहु पीन पाँवरनि पीना खाइ पोखे हैं ॥ 3 ॥
 प्रमुदित—मन लोक—कोक—नद कोकगन,
 रामके प्रताप—रबि सोच—सर सोखे हैं ।
 तबके देखैया तोषे, तबके लोगनि भले,
 अबके सुनैया साधु तुलसिहु तोषे हैं ॥ 4 ॥

(1/95)

lāja tōri, sāji sāja rājā rāṛha rōṣē haiṁ.
 kahā bhau caṛhā'ē cāpa, byāha hvai hai baṛē khā'ē,
 bōlaiṁ, khōlaiṁ sēla, asi camakata cōkhē haiṁ.. 1..
 jāni purajana trasē, dhīra dai laṣana hamśē,
 bala inakō pināka nīkē nāpē-jōkhē haiṁ.
 kulahi lajāvaiṁ bāla, bālisa bajāvaiṁ gāla,
 kaidhauri kūra kālabasa, tamaki tridōṣē haiṁ.. 2..
 kumvara caṛhā'i bhaunhaiṁ, aba kō bilōkai sōhaiṁ,
 jaham' taham' bhē acēta, khētakē-sē dhōkhē haiṁ.
 dēkhē nara-nāri kahaiṁ, sāga khā'i jā'ē mā'i,
 bāhu pīna pāmvarani pīnā khā'i pōkhē haiṁ.. 3..
 pramudita-mana lōka-kōka-nada kōkagana,
 rāmakē pratāpa-rabi sōca-sara sōkhē haiṁ.
 tabakē dēkhaiyā tōṣē, tabakē lōgani bhalē,
 abakē sunaiyā sādhu tulasihu tōṣē haiṁ.. 4..

The Frustrated Clamour & Ruckus created by the Defeated Kings

Verse no. 1/95—[As soon as Lord Ram broke the Bow and was declared victorious, the frustrated and peeved kings and princes who were overwhelmed with jealousy and malice because they had to face intense shame and humiliation in full public glare, threw all prudence and decorum to the wind and rose up to revolt. This scene is narrated also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266.

Remember: Not all kings acted foolishly and recklessly. Some of them were wise not to approach the bow in the first instance*, and others were wise to at least save whatever grace was left by keeping low once they returned unsuccessful from the bow. It was only the ones who were exceptionally haughty and arrogant and egoist who threw tantrums, unable to cope with their humiliation and public ridicule. These were the same kings who had boasted that they would be able to defeat even Kaal, the god of death, for the sake of marrying Sita#.

Now currently in our present verse no. 1/95 we shall recount what happened as soon as Lord Ram broke the bow and these over-jealous pervert kings sprang up to create a nasty ruckus.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no.7 that precedes Doha no. 246.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 245.]

Worthless kings (*rājā rāṇha*), abandoning all prudence and shame and throwing dignity and decorum to the wind, were extremely peeved, were full of rancour, and prepared for battle.

They exclaimed in exasperation: 'Ah! What happens by merely stringing the bow¹ (*kaḥā bhau caṛḥā'ē cāpa*)? The marriage would be finalised after a big deal is done (i.e. with great difficulty; it is not so easy to finalise the wedding as yet because much is yet to be done and seen) (*byāha hvai hai baṛē khā'ē*)!'

Saying this, they took out their spears (and daggers and lancets; '*khōlaim sēla*'), and shone the glistening blades of their swords (*asi camakata cōkhē haim*) (1)².

[¹Obviously, they were highly stupid. Didn't they see the bow breaking, and didn't they hear its horrific sound as it snapped into two? They refer only to "the stringing of the bow", and overlook that the bow was not only lifted and strung, but also 'broken' right before their eyes. In their overjealous madness they thought that the bow hadn't been broken yet, but had fallen to the ground after Lord Ram lifted and strung it. The great sound that was produced was, in their view, by the falling of the bow to the ground, and not by its breaking.

So, they shouted that the bow is yet intact, and not broken, and therefore the marriage is not yet final. Janak is creating a smokescreen to hide facts, and so they will all wage a battle against him and capture the two brothers, because the entire episode was stage-managed and premeditated to insult them. They cannot allow this to happen, and would fight to preserve their dignity and self-respect as is the wont of great kings and princes!

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266.]

Seeing this, the citizens were terrified (because they expected a blood-bath), but Laxman was nonchalant, nonplussed and unmoved. He consoled and pacified them (the citizens), laughed (derisively at the agitated kings) and said sarcastically, 'Ah! Their strength has been perfectly examined and measured by this Bow³! These idiots (by being defeated by the Bow) have put their entire clan to shame and ignominy, and now to add further insult to their already soured pride and inflated ego they have resorted to shouting nonsensically in vain, excitedly speaking incoherently as if they are under the entoxicating effect of 'Tridosh' (the three faults; or the three diseases caused by 'Kafa'—cough, mucous, 'Pitta'—bile, and 'Vayu'—air, wind) that is caused by Kalyug⁴!' (2).

[³The combined strength of all the kings was no match for the resistance offered by the Bow. In this battle of tug-and-pull, the stronger party always wins. Now as it haply happened, the Bow proved to be stronger than the combined strength of all the kings because no matter how hard and how mightily they tried, huffing and puffing with all their stamina and muscular power, the Bow didn't budge a fraction of a measurement. So all their boast of strength and power of arms was proved hollow and void before the full assembly. But still these stupid fellows dare to invite more ignominy upon themselves.

⁴When a person is suffering from disbalanced or mismatched ratio of these three basic regulators of bodily function, he suffers from a severe malaise, such as high fever that causes delirium. Such person begin to hallucinate and utter incomprehensible words. Laxman likens the angry reaction of the frustrated kings with this condition when the person who is afflicted by the disease does not know what he or she is saying, and mostly it is nonsense.]

Saying this, the prince (Laxman) curved his eye-brows (as a sign of scornful annoyance and anger). Who had the guts to look at his fierce countenance at that time, or who could dare face him)? Like the farmer's scare-crows, all of them (the vanity-filled kings with pervert minds and a false sense of ego), became lifeless wherever they were (i.e. in all the directions of the arena)⁵.

Seeing the miserably wretched condition of these boastful kings (who had shrivelled and felt hesitant as if they had lost their vigour when Laxman roared and glared back at them), the men and women folk of the city further mocked at the kings and derided them when they chided and poured scorn on these kings by saying loudly: 'Their mothers had eaten leafy vegetables before giving them birth (i.e. they lacked a diet rich in protein, which is why they are so weak in constitution and manly vigour and strength), and even after birth these wicked and sinful ones had nothing to eat for nourishment except oil cakes called 'Khali' (which is made from soiled dregs or waste of oil seeds after oil has been extracted—that is why they have no real strength in them) to fatten their arms into worthless lumps of flesh!⁶' (3).

[⁵As soon as Laxman got up and retorted to the wild tantrums of the frustrated and defeated kings, all of them folded up and none had the gut to answer Laxman back. They had seen Laxman's anger and dare-devilry a while ago when he had fearlessly dared to take Janak to task for declaring that the world was devoid of 'all' warriors at the time these very kings had failed to move the Bow, because this was a highly inappropriate statement for Janak to make when Lord Ram was sitting in the assembly right beside him, for the word 'all' included the Lord as well, whereas the latter had not even been given a chance to go to the Bow.

So the kings feared for the worse at the hands of Laxman. They had aimed their anger at Janak as they found him to be a quiet and well-disciplined king who was already weakened by the greatness of sorrows, and also because he being the host and the father of the princess would hesitate in acting roguely and use tough manners against his invitees. But of course Laxman was a different proposition all together.

The "farmer's scare-scrow" is designed like a man, but is lifeless. Its main use is to chase away the crows and protect the farmer's field from damage. So, Janak may be terrified by these kings just like the crow is in a farmer's field at the sight of the

contraption that shakes when wind blows over it, but that is all. No man is scared of this contraption known as the scare-crow, and likewise Laxman is not fearful of these hollow boasts of the kings.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 267 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 also.

⁶These caustic and disparaging remarks against the kings who had created the unseemly ruckus simply mean that they have already proved themselves weak and impotent in the face of the challenge. What right do they then have to shout so much if they virtually faint by a mere glance of Laxman; why have they all fallen silent like a dead scare-crow once Laxman got up from his seat to glare at them? Where is their strength and drawn swords gone now, relying upon which they were jumping and hopping madly a while ago?

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 268 also.]

In this manner, as soon as the splendorous sun represented by Lord Sri Ram's majestic glory, his matchless valour, courage and gallantry, and his brilliant virtues and immensity of fame (*rāmakē pratāpa-rabi*) rose and shone, all the world represented by the lotus and the birds Chakva-Chakvi (the ruddy goose) became exceedingly cheerful and merry with joy, while the lakes represented by sorrows, agonies, tribulations, troubles and confusions dried up (i.e. vanished)⁷.

Tulsidas says that all those who were noble, righteous, virtuous, pure-hearted and good, and who had witnessed and personally seen the events at that time, felt very happy and fully contented (*tabakē dēkhaiyā tōṣē, tabakē lōgani bhalē*), while all the saintly persons who heard about these glorious events and happy tidings later on also felt exceedingly happy and cheerful, and just like Tulsidas himself feels today (*abakē sunaiyā sādhu tulasihu tōṣē hairm*) (4).

[7When the sun rises, the lotus opens its petals as a sign of its gladness on seeing the sun. similarly, the Chakva bird couple had been subjected to sorrow during the night because they had separated from each other, but when the day comes they re-unite and feel happy. Thus, when Lord Ram broke the bow, all those who were good people felt very glad and happy, but those who were evil and pervert were the only ones who were disappointed and peeved like the kings cited in this verse.

With the advent of Lord Ram, the world was freed from all sorrows and grief because the Redeemer had come to live with the people and give them solace and succour.]

(1 / 96)

जयमाल जानकी जलजकर लई है।
 सुमन सुमंगल सगुनकी बनाइ मंजु,
 मानहु मदनमाली आपु निरमई है॥ १॥
 राज—रुख लखि गुर भूसुर सुआसिनिन्ह,
 समय—समाजकी ठवनि भली ठई है।
 चलीं गान करत, निसान बाजे गहगहे,

लहलहे लोयन सनेह सरसई है॥ 2॥
 हनि देव दुंदुभी हरषि बरषत फूल,
 सफल मनोरथ भौ, सुख-सुचितई है।
 पुरजन-परिजन, रानी-राउ प्रमुदित,
 मनसा अनूप राम-रूप-रंग रई है॥ 3॥
 सतानंद-सिष सुनि पाँय परि पहिराई,
 माल सिय पिय-हिय, सोहत सो भई है।
 मानसतें निकसि बिसाल सुतमालपर,
 मानहुँ मरालपाँति बैठी बनि गई है॥ 4॥
 हितनिके लाहकी, उछाहकी, बिनोद-मोद,
 सोभाकी अवधि नहि अब अधिकई है।
 याते बिपरीत अनहितनकी जानि लीबी
 गति, कहै प्रगट, खुनिस खासी खई है॥ 5॥
 निज निज बेदकी सप्रेम जोग-छेम-मई,
 मुदित असीस बिप्र बिदुषनि दई है।
 छबि तेहि कालकी कृपालु सीतादूलहकी
 हुलसति हिये तुलसीके नित नई है॥ 6॥

(1/96)

jayamāla jānakī jalajakara la'ī hai.
 sumana sumaṅgala sagunakī banā'i manjū,
 mānahu madanamālī āpu nirama'ī hai.. 1..
 rāja-rukha lakhi gura bhūsurā su'āsininha,
 samaya-samājakī ṭhavani bhalī ṭha'ī hai.
 calīm gāna karata, nisāna bājē gahagahē,
 lahalahē lōyana sanēha sarasa'ī hai.. 2..
 hani dēva dundubhī haraṣi barāṣata phūla,
 saphala manōratha bhau, sukha-sucita'ī hai.
 purajana-parijana, rānī-rā'u pramudita,
 manasā anūpa rāma-rūpa-raṅga ra'ī hai.. 3..
 satānanda-siṣa suni pām̐ya pari pahirā'ī,
 māla siya piya-hiya, sōhata sō bha'ī hai.
 mānasatēm nikasi bisāla sutamālapara,
 mānahum̐ marālapām̐ti baiṭhī bani ga'ī hai.. 4..
 hitanikē lāhakī, uchāhakī, binōda-mōda,
 sōbhākī avadhi nahi aba adhika'ī hai.
 yātē biparīta anahitanakī jāni libī
 gati, kahai pragaṭa, khunisa khāsī kha'ī hai.. 5..
 nija nija bēdakī saprēma jōga-chēma-ma'ī,
 mudita asīsa bipra biduṣani da'ī hai.
 chabi tēhi kālakī krpālu sītādūlahakī
 hulasati hiyē tulasīkē nita na'ī hai.. 6..

Sitā puts the Victory Garland on Lord Rām

Verse no. 1/96—[Once the Bow was broken by Lord Ram, his marriage with Sita was sealed. So, Janak's priest ordered Sita to go and put the Victory Garland around the neck of the victor, Lord Ram. This episode of Sita garlanding Lord Ram once the Bow was broken has also been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 263—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 264.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/93, stanza no. 3 herein above.]

Janki (Sita) has the 'Jayamāla' (the victory garland) in her hands. Its a beautiful garland which appears to have been strung by Kamdeo/cupid himself, who, disguised as a gardener, had collected the most beautiful of flowers of exceptional charm and loveliness that were available, and had then threaded them together using a pretty thread to create this magnificent garland especially for this auspicious occasion¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 264 also.]

Seeing that the king (Janak) has given his approval, his Guru Shatanand, the Brahmins (elders; priests who would perform the wedding rituals) who were present there, and the virtuous ladies who surrounded Sita as her bridesmaids and friends thereat escorted Sita and moved forward towards the place where Lord Ram stood².

They had with them all the auspicious paraphernalia needed and suited for the occasion, and kept Sita in front of the procession. All of them were singing auspicious and felicitous songs. At that instant, musical instruments started playing enchanting music, while affection dripped from the eyes of all those who were anxious, eager and excited to have a Darshan (a glimpse) of Lord Ram alongside Sita (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 263 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

The Gods sounded their kettle-drums and trumpets in the heaven, and happily showered flowers upon the gathering. Having their wishes fulfilled (that Lord Ram should marry Sita), the Gods are experiencing an excess of joy, exhilaration, contentedness, bliss and mental peace³.

The inhabitants of the city, the servants, the servitors and the subordinates, and the queen and the king (Sunaina and Janak) themselves—all are all highly delighted and exuberant with joy.

All of them are captivated and held in thrall by the magnificence of the Lord's majestic presence, by the immensity of his beauty and grace, by the profundity of his glory and fame all of which are of varied hues and as enchanting as the flagrant flowers of many and varied colours, shapes and sizes⁴ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 265 also.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 265.]

Thereat, on the advice of her Guru Shatanand, Sita dropped at the feet (i.e. touched the feet) of Lord Sri Ram (to pay her respect and obeisance), and then garlanded her beloved Lord⁵.

At that time, standing by the side of Lord Ram, she looks so splendourous, so magnificent, so wonderful, so regal, so majestic and so lovely that the sight reminds one of a group of 'royal swans' (*marāla*) who have emerged one after the other from the Mansarovar lake (the pristine pure lake in the Himalayas) and have perched themselves in a row on a beautiful Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant) to decorate it⁶ (*mānasatēm nikasi bisāla sutamālapara, mānahum̐ marālapām̐ti baiṭhī bani gaī hai*) (4).

[⁵In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 264 we read that Sita was so overpowered with emotions of happiness and joy and ecstasy beyond imagination that for some moments her mind failed to react and her body became stone-cast, unable to respond to the advice of her guru as well as her friends to lift the garland and put it around the neck of Lord Ram as a sign of the Lord's victory and the sealing of the bond of marriage. But she recovered soon and put the 'victory garland' around the neck of her beloved Lord in all willingness and cheerfulness even as her friends sang auspicious songs befitting the occasion.

⁶Here, since the complexion of Sri Ram is dark, he is likened to a Tamal tree, while Sita with her fair complexion is compared to the Swan which has a white skin. The rising of her after bending to touch the feet of Sri Ram, her stretching and lifting of the arms so as to raise the garland above the Lord's head, and then slipping the garland down around his neck and draping it on his shoulders and chest is compared here to the swans coming out of the lake, then swarming towards the black catechu tree, and then finally settling on it. The poetic imagination and similes used by Tulsidas are indeed brilliant and remarkable.

Refer also to: (i) Janki Mangal, verse no. 109; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264.]

To those who have affection and endearment for the Lord, there is no other greater and opportune moment to rejoice, to feel exhilarated and ecstatic, and to enjoy the magnificence and grandeur of such a happy and rare occasion in their lives.

But on the contrary, those who have malice, envy, jealousy and opposition towards the Lord—their condition, behaviour and demeanours should be considered just the opposite. Anger and jealousy apparently appear to have fully devoured them (5)⁷.

[⁷This stanza refers, on the one hand, to the citizens of Janakpur who were absolutely happy and charmed at this auspicious turn of events, and on the other hand to the defeated kings and princes who could not break the Bow and felt frustrated and humiliated.] (5).

Then, expert Brahmins gave their blessings for the welfare and well-being of the couple by using (or invoking) the hymns of the respective Vedas in which they were qualified.

Tulsidas avers that the charming image (*chabi*) of the merciful, compassionate and gracious 'Groom of Sita' (*'sītādūlaha'*; Lord Ram) as he appeared on that happy occasion remains fresh in his heart, and this magnificent sight of that instant keeps emerging afresh every day in his mind and heart⁸ (6).

[⁸This is one of the chief ways of “Bhakti”, i.e. having devotion for Lord God: it is to keep the mind persistently focused on the Lord, and let the Lord’s thoughts dominate one’s life and subconsciousness.]

राग केदारा

(1 / 97)

लेहु री ! लोचननिको लाहु ।
 कुँवर सुंदर साँवरो, सखि सुमुखि ! सादर चाहु ॥ 1 ॥
 खडि हर-कोदंड ठाढ़े, जानु-लंबित-बाहु ।
 रुचिर उर जयमाल राजति, देत सुख सब काहु ॥ 2 ॥
 चितै चित-हित-सहित नख-सिख अंग-अंग निबाहु ।
 सुकृत निज, सियराम-रूप, बिरचि-मतिहि सराहु ॥ 3 ॥
 मुदित मन बरबदन-सोभा उदित अधिक उछाहु ।
 मनहु दूरि कलंक करि ससि समर सूद्यो राहु ॥ 4 ॥
 नयन सुखमा-अयन हरत सरोज-सुंदरताहु ।
 बसत तुलसीदास-उरपुर जानकीकौ नाहु ॥ 5 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(1/97)

lēhu rī! lōcananikō lāhu.
 kumvara sundara sāmvarō, sakhi sumukhi! sādara cāhu.. 1..
 khaṇḍi hara-kōdaṇḍa ṭhārḥē, jānu-lambita-bāhu.
 rucira ura jayamāla rājati, dēta sukha saba kāhu.. 2..
 citai cita-hita-sahita nakha-sikha aṅga-aṅga nibāhu.
 sukr̥ṭa nija, siyarāma-rūpa, birañci-matihi sarāhu.. 3..
 mudita mana barabadana-sōbhā udita adhika uchāhu.
 manahu dūri kalaṅka kari sasi samara sūdyō rāhu.. 4..
 nayana sukhamā-ayana harata sarōja-sundaratāhu.
 basata tulasīdāsa-urapura jānakīkau nāhu.. 5..

Lord Rām’s enchanting image

Verse no. 1/97—[This verse and the one following it, no. 1/98, describe the wonderfully charming image of Lord Ram after the victory. We have read about this similar image in

earlier verses also, but they relate to the time prior to the breaking of the bow and Sita putting the victory garland on the Lord. Such earlier verses are nos. 1/76—1/83 herein above.]

[One of the many ladies said to another, her companion—] ‘Oh, the sweet-faced friend of mine (rī; sakhi sumukhi!)! Have (or enjoy) the benefit (or reward) of your eyes (or eyesight) now (lēhu lōcananikō lāhu).

Look, the dark complexioned prince (Lord Sri Ram) is exceedingly pretty (kumvara sundara sāmvarō). Have a good look at him (with reverence and devotion in your heart—sādara cāhu) (1).

There he is standing after breaking the Bow, with his long arms stretched upto his thighs (jānu-lambita-bāhu).

A beautiful ‘victory garland’ (known as the jayamāla) adorns his chest and abdomen (rucira ura jayamāla rājati), and this enthralling sight gives joy, delight and happiness to everyone (dēta sukha saba kāhu) (2).

Watch him endearingly and with full attention because his sight gives pleasure and happiness to the mind (citai cita-hita-sahita).

Verily, from the toe nail to the tuft of hairs on his head, his entire body is well moulded and shaped even as it looks very charming and befitting of the occasion (of marriage, when the groom is expected to look in his very best form) (nakha-sikha aṅga-aṅga nibāhu).

Looking at them (i.e. at Lord Ram and Sita standing side-by-side), praise your good and noble deeds that you have got this rare opportunity (sukṛta nija), as well as enjoy the beauteous and enchanting image of Sita and Lord Sri Ram standing together (siyarāma-rūpa).

Marvel at the excellence of intelligence and the creativity of imagination of the Creator, his excellent craftsmanship and skillfulness, that he has so expertly crafted and perfectly moulded this couple (the like of which is nowhere to be found in this world created by the same Creator!) (biranīci-matihi sarāhu) (3).

Watch, the radiance, the brilliant glow and the charm of the Lord’s face are all the more enhanced and appear with heightened beauty and magnificence because of his gladdened heart (as he has broken the Bow and won the hands of Sita in marriage) (mudita mana barabadana-sōbhā udita adhika uchāhu).

Indeed, he looks as if the Moon-God has washed-off the stain that had been tormenting him for long by killing his arch enemy known as ‘Rahu’ in a duel (manahu dūri kalaṅka kari sasi samara sūdyō rāhu)¹ (4).

[¹According to mythological legend, the demon named ‘Rahu’ devours the Moon God occasionally when the latter shows its self in full glory to the world, i.e. during the full moon night. This refers to the lunar eclipse. It is believed that the moon enters the mouth of Rahu at the beginning of the cclipse, and emerges from the bottom of the demon’s severed head when the eclipse ends. The time the moon takes to pass through the Rahu’s mouth is the time of the full eclipse when the moon isn’t visible.

This is a constant irritant for the Moon God. When he became fed-up with it, he decided to settle the matter once and for all, so there was a battle between Moon God and the demon Rahu. In this duel, Rahu was slayed, thereby freeing the Moon God of his perpetual tormentor.

Now, the second part of the legend, relating to the Rahu being slayed by the Moon God, is imaginary, and is used just for poetic purposes. Just as the Moon looks gloomy when Rahu approaches it though its face is inherently brilliant and shining, Lord Ram looked sad and sorrowful when he watched the agony and grief of Sita, Janak and the rest of the citizens prior to the breaking of the Bow.

And now once the Bow has been broken and all have become joyful, cheer and happiness returned on the face of the Lord with enhanced intensity. Lord Ram's breaking of the Bow is likened here to the Moon God who has killed Rahu and removed the cause of gloom for all times to come.]

His eyes, which are inherently an abode of exceptional beauty, charm and glamour (*nayana sukhāmā-ayana*), appear to have stolen (i.e. defeat, win over, subdue) the loveliness, the prettiness, of the lotus flower (*harata sarōja-sundaratāhu*).

Verily, this enchanting and heart-pleasing (image of) Lord of Janki (i.e. Lord Sri Ram who is the husband of Sita) resides in the inner sanctum of Tulsidas' heart (*basata tulasīdāsa-urapura jānakīkau nāhu*)' (5).

[Note—Tulsidas is playing a trick here. In the preceding verse no. 1/96, he asserts that the beautiful, enchanting image of Sri Ram keeps emerging in his heart. And in this verse he has used the women folk of Janakpur to confirm, are rather ratify and assert as a matter of fact, that it really does. When we say something and someone else approves of it or concurs with what we say, then it is, for all practical purposes, taken to be true.

It will be noted while going through the verses of Geetawali that at the end of the majority of verses, Tulsidas has appended a word or two to say, in effect, that such and such charming image or beautiful glory of Sri Ram always resides in his heart. In many cases, he asks Sri Ram for such a boon, at other times he says he already has it and calls in independent witnesses, so to say, to endorse his assertion.

Not that he ever doubted that the Lord resides in his heart because he was a true and realised devotee of Lord Ram, but on and off he invites some independent observer to stand witness to what he says about the Lord residing in his heart, such as the case in this particular verse where the ladies also assert that the beautiful image of Lord Ram is housed in the inner sanctum of Tulsidas' heart.

Tulsidas did not wish to be boastful about his devotion for Lord Ram and the fact that his heart is like a shrine for Lord Ram, lest the Lord would deem him to be showy and pretentious and endeavour to remove that image or reflection from his heart. So he cleverly and wisely first asks the Lord to remain in his heart, and then quotes others to substantiate his assertion that the Lord is always present there!]

राग सारंग

(1 / 98)

भूपके भागकी अधिकारि ।

टूट्यो धनुष, मनोरथ पूज्यौ, बिधि सब बात बनाई॥ 1॥
 तबतें दिन—दिन उदय जनकको जबतें जानकी जाई।
 अब यहि ब्याह सफल भयो जीवन, त्रिभुवन बिदित बड़ाई॥ 2॥
 बारहि बार पहुनई ऐहैं राम लषन दोउ भाई।
 एहि आनंद मगन पुरबासिन्ह देहदसा बिसराई॥ 3॥
 सादर सकल बिलोकत रामहि, काम—कोटि छबि छाई।
 यह सुख समउ समाज एक मुख क्यों तुलसी कहै गाई॥ 4॥

rāga sārāṅga

(1/98)

bhūpakē bhāgākī adhikā'ī.
 tūṭyō dhanuṣa, manōratha pūjyau, bidhi saba bāta banā'ī.. 1..
 tabatēm dina-dina udaya janakakō jabatēm jānakī jā'ī.
 aba yahi byāha saphala bhayō jīvana, tribhuvana bidita baṛā'ī.. 2..
 bārahi bāra pahuna'ī aihaiṁ rāma laṣana dō'u bhā'ī.
 ēhi ānanda magana purabāsinha dēhadasā bisarā'ī.. 3..
 sādara sakala bilōkata rāmaḥi, kāma-kōṭi chabi chā'ī.
 yaha sukha sama'u samāja ēka mukha kyōm tulasī kahai gā'ī.. 4..

Janak's good fortunes

Verse no. 1/98—[Someone else praises king Janak and asserts—] 'It is the greatness and immenseness of the king's (Janak's) good luck and the reward of his meritorious deeds that the Bow has broken, the wishes of his have been fulfilled (i.e. his vows have been kept), and the Creator has made things go the right way and made things favourable for us (1).

Ever since Janaki (Sita) has been born, Janak's stars have been on the ascendance. Having got her married-off has made his life most fruitful and fulfilled (i.e. Janak is feeling very contented, happy and joyful with no more desires left to be fulfilled)¹.

At this point of time, Janak's great fame, that had hitherto remained unrevealed or hidden from knowledge of the world and was on the verge of being mired in controversy and ignominy (if no one could break the bow and Sita had to remain unmarried), has now emerged in a shining and glorified form and revealed to the whole world consisting of the three divisions known as 'tribhuvana'² (2).

[¹It is a moral and social obligation for the father to marry his daughter during his lifetime. So when Sita's marriage, which was till now dangling by a fragile thread of uncertainty, was finalized with Lord Ram without his having to go back or changing his vows, it was a like a lifetime reward given to Janak for all the good things he had done in his life.

²Till this time, Janak was one of the thousands of kings who ruled over the earth, and there was nothing special about him. But this ceremony in which Shiva's Bow was broken had established his fame and name throughout the three divisions of the world—because not everyone has such a Bow, and this Bow had been the reason why all the renowned kings and princes had assembled at Janakpur. They had all seen Janak's majesty, prosperity and wealth of his kingdom, as well as his sense of rightousness, probity and adherence to his words. So, even those who had hitherto not heard of Janak had now become aware of him and his majestic glory and eclectic virtues. Thus, Janak's fame and name were henceforth established in the heavens, the whole of the earth, and even in the nether world.

This was also aided by the breaking of the Bow, primarily because everyone living in any corner of the creation had become aware of this rare event when a thunderous sound and deafening roar was created at the time the Bow actually broke so much so that its shock waves were felt in all the corners of this creation—the heaven, the whole of the surface of the earth, and the nether world. And naturally everyone had wished to know the cause of this tumult, and upon enquiry all had become aware of the bow-breaking event in the kingdom of one great king by the name of Janak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 261; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262.]

Ah! Now these two brothers, Lord Sri Ram and Laxman, would be visiting us repeatedly as guests of honour (of the king, and by extension of all the citizens of the kingdom) (bārahi bāra pahunaī aihaim)³.

The citizens, thus, were so overwhelmed and intoxicated with excess of joy, delight and exhilaration (ēhi ānanda magana purabāsinha) that they lost awareness of their bodies ('dēhadasā bisarāī'; i.e. they forgot about everything else, about their surroundings, daily chores, their families and everything related to their routine mundane existence—and their mind and heart were completely overcome by the surging waves of happiness and joy that the present moment presented to them) (3).

[³Now that Lord Ram has married Sita by breaking the Bow, he has become king Janak's son-in-law, and therefore the citizens were sure the Lord would be coming to pay visits in the future also. This made them very happy as then they would have another chance to interact with the Lord. In fact, this was the earnest wish of the citizens of Janakpur ever since they first saw Lord Ram, and this wish of theirs has now been fulfilled. Otherwise, once the two brothers went away when the ceremony closed, they would obviously never be ever coming back again. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.]

Everyone was looking reverentially, and with great respect heaving in their hearts, at Lord Sri Ram (sādara sakala bilōkata rāma) who was adorned with the beauty and charm that were equivalent to millions of Kamdeo/cupids taken together (kāma-kōṭi chabi chāī)⁴.

Tulsidas is enthralled and awestruck in amazement at the heavenly sight that wonderful scene presented. He says that it was so amazingly fascinating, so captivating for the mind and so enchanting for the heart that it is not possible for him to describe with a single mouth the immensity and depth of it, as well as of the emotions of happiness and

joy that were unleashed at that time, of the pleasant and most fortunate events, circumstances and ecstatic environment of that time, and of extremely elated, exuberant, euphoric and cheerful assembly that had collected there to enjoy the good and auspicious moment of that time (yaha sukha sama'u samāja ēka mukha kyōm tulasī kahai gā'i)⁵ (4).

[⁴In other words, the virtue of 'beauty and magnificence', that is worth or equivalent to millions of Kamdeo/cupids, had spread over Lord Sri Ram to make the already charming Lord of the world more stunning than ever before.

⁵In other words, Tulsidas finds himself inadequate and incompetent to give an idea of the immensity of happiness and joy that surged at that time, because words have their own limitations and they can't do justice with the depth and immensity of emotions and sentiments that are of a sublime and subtle nature, and which cannot be butted and bounded by the limitations inherent in the use of words. The degree of joy, happiness, delight, ecstasy, euphoria and exhilaration that was felt by all present on the occasion, the atmosphere of celebrations and festivities that permeated everywhere, and the emotions of the people were so high and intense at that auspicious time that they virtually overflowed the land as if a river was in spate or an ocean of these virtues was in high tide so much so that even the best of wordsmiths would fail to give others an idea of even a fraction of those glad tidings because they can't be encapsulated and captured in words.]

विवाहकी तैयारी

राग सोरठ

(1 / 99)

मेरे बालक कैसे धौं मग निबहहिंगे?
 भूख, पियास, सीत, श्रम सकुचनि क्यों कौसिकहि कहहिंगे ॥ 1 ॥
 को भोर ही उबटि अन्हवैहै, काढ़ि कलेऊ दैहै ?
 को भूषन पहिराइ निछावरि करि लोचन-सुख लैहै ? ॥ 2 ॥
 नयन निमेषनि ज्यों जोगवै नित पितु-परिजन-महतारी।
 ते पठए ऋषि साथ निसाचर मारन, मख रखवारी ॥ 3 ॥
 सुंदर सुटि सुकुमार सुकोमल काकपच्छ-धर दोऊ।
 तुलसी निरखि हरषि उर लैहौं बिधि हैहै दिन सोऊ ? ॥ 4 ॥

Vivāha kī taiyārī

rāga sōraṭha

(1/99)

mērē bālaka kaisē dhaurṁ maga nibahahiṅgē?
 bhūkha, piyāsa, sīta, śrama sakucani kyōṁ kausikahi kahahiṅgē.. 1..
 kō bhōra hī ubaṭi anhavaihai, kāḍhi kalē'ū daihai?
 kō bhūṣana pahirā'i nichāvari kari lōcana-sukha lai hai?.. 2..
 nayana nimēṣani jyōṁ jōgavairṁ nita pitu-parijana-mahatārī.
 tē paṭha'e ṛṣi sātha nisācara mārana, makha rakhavārī.. 3..
 suṁdara suṭhi sukumāra sukōmala kākapaccha-dhara dō'ū.
 tulasī nirakhi haraṣi ura lai haum bidhi hvaihai dina sō'ū?.. 4..

Prelude to the departure of the Groom's Party from Ayodhya for the Wedding
 Ceremony at Janakpur:

The situation in Ayodhya after Lord Ram & Laxman
 had gone with sage Vishwamitra—1

Verse no. 1/99—[Thus far we have read about the developments at Janakpur where Lord Ram successfully broke the Bow and, having fulfilled Janak's vow, was betrothed to Sita, Janak's daughter.

In the meanwhile, ever since the two brothers had gone away from Ayodhya, their mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively, were very sad and worried. In verse nos. 1/99-1/100 we read about their emotional condition and sadness.

This verse no. 1/99 describes the fear and worries of Kaushalya. She is extremely worried, pensive and remorseful as she broods and recollects those happy days when her beloved son Lord Sri Ram and his brother Laxman were with her. She had brought up the two brothers with utmost love and care, never allowing them to face any kind of difficulties. And now all of a sudden sage Vishwamitra took them away to his far away hermitage in the deep forest. The two brothers had to walk on foot like ordinary people, and eat and live like ordinary folk. They weren't accustomed to the harsh life of the world, and especially of the forest. They had spent their lives till now in lap of luxury as the princes of a great kingdom, and suddenly they had to undergo extreme hardships. So the mother is worried as to how well they were managing to cope with their new lives—what were they eating, do they take their bath regularly, where and how were they sleeping, do they feel the ground hard and unable to take rest, weren't they tired of walking on hard earth, are they in any kind of suffering or are they enjoying their first excursion, are they homesick, and so many similar thoughts crowded Kaushalya's mind, making her gloomy and sad.]

In this verse, mother Kaushalya broods and talks to herself: 'How would my children cope with the toils and travails of the (forest) path? Will they hesitate to tell Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) about their hunger, thirst, cold, weariness and tiredness etc.¹?

[And if they hesitate to tell the sage about their problems and discomfort because they would be feeling shy and reluctant to speak before a mighty sage of Vishwamitra's stature as is their wont and natural habit because they are always bashful and softspoken and obedient to the extreme, never even telling me about their needs and be contented with whatso comes their way, then how will the kind sage know about their discomfort, and how will he take measures to alleviate the problem? What would happen then? The two brothers would be suffering in silence without any fault of the gracious sage, for it is sure that if he comes to know that the two brothers are feeling uneasy in the slightest he is sure to find a solution. But will this happen?] (1).

[¹Refer verse no. 1/101, stanza nos. 2-3 herein below where Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, too expresses this apprehension.]

Who will bathe them in the morning after massaging Ubtan² on their bodies (as I used to do here)? Who would give them breakfast and snacks, who would adorn them with ornaments, and who would make charity on their behalf and enjoy the benefit of one's eyesight (by looking at them caringly and affectionately)³? (2).

[²The "Ubtan" is a thick paste made from flour of roasted gram mixed with water, a little bit of powdered turmeric, some selected herbs and scents. It is rubbed on the body to clean it. It is the precursor to the modern-day soap and shampoo.

³Mother Kaushalya used to do all these things every morning. As a loving and caring mother, she used to rub the Ubtan on the body of her children, give them a nice bath, then make them eat a good breakfast, and then make alms for their welfare and happiness. She used to enjoy doing all these things, and derived immense pleasure watching her sons grow. Now, who will do these things in the forest? The very thought was very tormenting for her, and she was literally unconsolable.]

They (i.e. Lord Sri Ram and Laxman)—who were always well looked after by their father, mothers, relatives and kins with the same tenderness and care with which the eyelid protects the eye—have been sent by the king (Dasrath) with sage Vishwamitra to protect his fire sacrifice and to destroy the demons!⁴ (3).

[⁴It's so incredulous and unbelievable that the king did not give proper thought of the consequences of his decision when he consented to send these two young and tender boys, who had never seen pain and sufferings, nor had ever experienced the harshness of outside world and its tumultuous realities, with the sage. Why did he not take into consideration the fact that he was sending these two boys alone to face the might of the ferocious demons, for the sage had clearly told him the reason why he wants Lord Ram and Laxman to come with him to his hermitage in the forest? Couldn't at least the king send an armed escort with them; couldn't he ask the sage why he was pressuring him to part with these two inexperienced, young and tender princes who till now had no experience of a real battle-field with ordinary human warriors, what to talk about battling powerful demons who had even terrified the gods of heaven, ere giving his consent? Why did the king take such a risk as to put these two inexperienced and tender sons of mine to such grave peril as to danger their lives, and why didn't he ask the sage to look for alternatives if his main purpose was to protect his fire sacrifice.

It's quite possible that one of our jealous enemies have conspired to devise this deceitful device by which they could bring sorrow and disaster to our whole family, and

to give effect to their nefarious design they contrived this cunning method whereby they somehow prevailed upon the simple-hearted sage Vishwamitra, pretending to be his well-wisher, when they advised him that if he wished his fire sacrifice to be protected from being defiled by the demons then he should bring the two princes of king Dasartha with him, as for this they were sure that the noble king would find it impossible to refuse the sage his wish as it pertained to a noble cause such as the protection of a fire sacrifice, and if this comes to happen and their contrivance succeeded, as they hoped in their pervert and malicious mind, then the two princes would be subjected to grave danger and peril while fighting the ferocious demons to fulfill the requirement of the sage, and this would be something that would rejoice their hearts, and they weren't bothered if it would prove ruinous and devastating for our family, for this was exactly something that they wanted. And unfortunately, the unwary sage fell into their carefully laid-out plan. It's quite possible.

But well, why did the king act in haste, and what was such a compulsion for him? In any case, why didn't he consult me who am a mother of these two children before taking an unilateral decision? After all, it was not something related to the administrative affair of the kingdom where he has an unalienable and unchallenged right to make decisions; it was the question of my sons, and I had equal right as he has to have a say on the issue. Now, what would happen if some harm, god forbid, comes to my dear children; will the king answer me or would he, for his life, able to turn the wheel of time back to restore my beloved children to me?]

Tulsidas says that the mother prayed to the Creator in these words of hope and expectation: 'Oh Creator! Will that day ever come (and when will it come) when I might watch those most beautiful, attractive, lovely, delicate and tender boys with a bun (or a tuft of hair) on their heads and curly locks of hair dangling on the sides of their faces, a bewitching sight that would make me feel exhilarated, and when would I thrillingly embrace them once again?' (4).

(1 / 100)

ऋषि नृप-सीस ठगौरी-सी डारी ।
 कुलगुर, सचिव, निपुन नेवनि अवरेब न समुझि सुधारी ॥ 1 ॥
 सिरिस-सुमन-सुकुमार कुँवर दोउ, सूर सरोष सुरारी ।
 पठए बिनहि सहाय पयादेहि केलि-बान-धुनधारी ॥ 2 ॥
 अति सनेह-कातरि माता कहै, सुनि सखि! बचन दुखारी ।
 बादि बीर-जननी-जीवन जग, छत्रि-जाति-गति भारी ॥ 3 ॥
 जो कहिहै फिरे राम-लखन घर करि मुनिमख-रखवारी ।
 सो तुलसी प्रिय मोहिं लागिहै ज्यौं सुभाय सुत चारी ॥ 4 ॥

(1/100)

r̥ṣi nr̥pa-sīsa ṭhagaurī-sī ḍārī.
 kulagura, saciva, nipuna nēvani avarēba na samujhi sudhārī.. 1..
 sirisa-sumana-sukumāra kum̐vara dō'u, sūra sarōṣa surārī.
 paṭha'e binahi sahāya payādēhi kēli-bāna-dhunadhārī.. 2..
 ati sanēha-kātari mātā kahai, suni sakhi! bacana dukhārī.
 bādi bīra-jananī-jīvana jaga, chatrī-jāti-gati bhārī.. 3..
 jō kahihai phirē rāma-lakhana ghara kari munimakha-rakhavārī.
 sō tulasī priya mōhir̥m lāgihai jyauṁ subhāya suta cārī.. 4..

The situation in Ayodhya after Lord Ram & Laxman
 had gone with sage Vishwamitra—2

Verse no. 1/100—[The mother, Kaushalya, continues to brood and lament—] 'The sage (Vishwamitra) appears to have cast a magical spell on the head (intellect) of the king (Dasrath) so much that the latter lost his common sense.

But even if the king was spellbound for any reason, at least his advisors and councilors such as the family's trusted Guru (moral preceptor and family priest who is regarded as very wise and farsighted; sage Vasistha), the king's wise ministers (led by Sumantra, the chief of the ministers), and other lords, nobles, knights, grantees and commanders of the kingdom should have intervened and given him sane council so that this unsavoury situation could have been averted and some excuse could have been devised to avoid the sage's proposal. [But unfortunately, none lived up to their responsibilities.]¹ (1).

[¹Mother Kaushalya's lamentation is typical of how a loving mother thinks of her beloved son. A mother's attitude is more often than not in stark contrast to that of the father, though both love their off-spring equally, for the latter wishes to allow his children to grow up and face the harshness of the real world and become ready to face life one day when he would be no more to look after them and earn bread and butter for the family, but the mother, if she is given her choice, would rather have her sons live in the best of comforts she can afford, and not suffer even the slightest of discomfort, even if that means making them ill-equipped to face the harsh realities of life and learn to fend for themselves once the bread-earning father dies.

Presently, Kaushalya was not aware that king Dasrath was very reluctant to send the two brothers with sage Vishwamitra. In fact, he had initially flatly said 'no' to the sage. He had feared about their safety more than Kaushalya, and he had minced no words in telling the sage that he is willing to do whatever the sage proposes as an alternative other than sending the two princes to the forest to fight demons. It is not acceptable, the king had said. Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/51; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 208.]

[Indeed, it is so painful and worrying and inconsiderate on the part of the king and his councilors to send the two brothers to the forest when one thinks of the task they are

expected to do in there.] Come to think of it—on the one hand are the two princes (Lord Ram and Laxman) who are as delicate and tender as the flowers of Siras tree (which is tall lofty tree, similar to Shesham), and on the other hand are the demons (they have been sent to fight and defeat) who are very dangerous, extremely ferocious and exceedingly wrathful.

Inspite of that knowlege, they were sent with toy-like (small) bows and arrows to face this mighty enemy, without any help or support of the kingdom's army, and that too on foot (without any chariot or any other sort of vehicle)!' (2).

Mother Kaushalya was thus extremely anxious due to her motherly affections, and overcome with sorrows and worries. She lamented thus: 'Verily, the life of the mother of a valiant male (warrior) is in vain, and the fate of the Kshatriya caste is all the more perilous, being surrounded in uncertainties and ridden with horrors of pain and suffering² (3).

[²Kaushalya alludes to the fact that the Kshatriya is a warrior class, and their main occupation is to protect the other classes from being tormented by tyrants. They cannot say 'no' on such occasions. From their very childhood days, they are trained for the purpose. Warfare is a staple for this race of people, and they cannot say 'no' to battle, especially when the cause is righteous and noble as was the case with Lord Ram and Laxman who were sent to protect the fire sacrifice of a great sage. And 'war' is uncertain and merciless—thousands of sons, brothers and husbands have perished in this fire.

So, the mother of a Kshatriya son feels lucky if she happens to see her son become old during her lifetime—because that is very rare. That is why Kaushalya laments at Sri Ram's accompanying sage Vishwamitra to the forest because she knows that he will have to face and fight ferocious demons, and the risks and perils were great.]

In all sooth I say that anyone who informs me that Ram and Laxman have returned home after having protected the sage's fire sacrifice successfully, verily I say that that person will be naturally as dear to me as my four sons³.' (4).

[⁴Kaushalya here refers to all the four brothers, Lord Ram and his younger step-brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, as her own sons. Laxman's mother was queen Sumitra, and Kaikeyi was the mother of the other two, Bharat and Shatrughan.

The remarkable point to note here is the extraordinary level of mutual love and affection, a sense of oneness and close bond of familial ties that existed in those times. There was no jealousy between siblings and members of a household, and every member regarded others with full respect and trust as if they were all different bodies but one soul. If one member suffered, all felt the pain; if one rejoiced, all rejoiced as well. Wealth and travails of life were equally shared, home and trade was a joint affair, and so was defeat and victory. There was no feeling of being junior or senior amongst the members of the same family, and all contributed equally to uphold the name and dignity of the family as a whole and each other at the individual level.

One does not fail to note that this unique level of love and affection that created a bond and a feeling of oneness and commonness and brotherliness and comradeship amongst members of a family who shared inviolable trust with each other so much that their relationships and ties truly conformed to the saying that 'blood is thicker than water'

was the norm in ancient times, and this is in sharp contrast to the fractured society of today.]

(1 / 101)

जबतें लै मुनि संग सिधाए ।
 राम लखनके समाचार, सखि ! तबतें कछुअ न पाए ॥ 1 ॥
 बिनु पानही गमन, फल भोजन, भूमि सयन तरुछाहीं ।
 सर-सरिता जलपान, सिसुनके सँग सुसेवक नाही ॥ 2 ॥
 कौसिक परम कृपालु परमहित, समरथ, सुखद, सुचाली ।
 बालक सुठि सुकुमार सकोची, समुझि सोच मोहि आली ॥ 3 ॥
 बचन सप्रेम सुमित्राके सुनि सब सनेह-बस रानी ।
 तुलसी आइ भरत तेहि औसर कही सुमंगल बानी ॥ 4 ॥

(1/101)

jabatēm lai muni saṅga sidhā'ē.
 rāma lakhanakē samācāra, sakhi! tabatēm kachu'a na pā'ē.. 1..
 binu pānahī gamana, phala bhōjana, bhūmi sayana taruchāhīm.
 sara-saritā jalapāna, sisunakē saṁga susēvaka nāhīm.. 2..
 kausika parama kṛpālu paramahita, samaratha, sukhada, sucālī.
 bālaka suṭhi sukumāra sakōcī, samujhi sōca mōhi ālī.. 3..
 bacana saprēma sumitrākē suni saba sanēha-basa rānī.
 tulasī ā'i bharata tēhi ausara kahī sumaṅgala bānī.. 4..

The situation in Ayodhya after Lord Ram & Laxman
 had gone with sage Vishwamitra—3

Verse no. 1/101—[In this verse, we read how Sumitra, Laxman's mother, lamented. She confides to her friend—] 'Oh Friend (sakhi)! Ever since the sage (Vishwamitra) took them away, I have not heard any news about Ram and Laxman (1).

They will have to walk barefoot, eat fruits, sleep on the earth (without any semblance of a mattress) under the shade of a tree, and drink the water of rivers and ponds. There is not even a good and helpful servant with them (2).

There is no doubt that sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) is indeed very kind and compassionate, most favourable, gracious and benignant, most able and potent, a provider of comfort and happiness, is of course of an excellent character, and is self-restrained.

That is alright. But, at the same time, the simple and pure-hearted (i.e. inexperienced and shy) children are also very delicate and tender and hesitant in their demeanours. [They will feel shy to tell the sage anything they want. How will the sage know if they are thirsty or hungry or want to take a rest? The sage is a veteran of the forest, and living with hardships is normal for him, so how will he understand the needs of delicate and tender princes who have never known the word 'hardship'? since the two brothers would feel shy to ask anything of the sage, they would continue to suffer without the sage even being aware of their suffering. I am sure that if the sage comes to know about their smallest of needs and wants, he will immediately take care of it and ensure that the two boys are happy and contented. But the problem is these two boys won't tell the sage.]

Oh Friend! It is because of this thought that I am very affright and worried.¹ (3).

[¹Refer verse no. 1/99, stanza no. 1 herein above where Kaushalya also expresses this apprehension.]

Hearing these words of Sumitra that were at once soaked in love and affection for the two brothers as well as expressed her anguish and pain, all the queens were overcome with motherly love, and they too were pensive and sad.

Tulsidas says that it was just then that Bharat came in and spoke pleasant, comforting and auspicious words² (4).

[²It so happened that royal messengers of king Janak arrived at Ayodhya with the good tidings of Lord Ram's engagement with Sita after breaking of the bow, and they carried a letter of invitation for king Dasrath. Bharat and Shatrughan learnt of the good news and then Bharat rushed inside the palace to inform the mothers of the happy tidings. This is narrated in detail in the following verse no. 1/102 below.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 291.

(1 / 102)

सानुज भरत भवन उठि धाए ।

पितु-समीप सब समाचार सुनि, मुदित मातु पहुँ आए ॥ 1 ॥

सजल नयन, तनु पुलक, अधर फरकत लखि प्रीति सुहाई ।

कौसल्या लिये लाइ हृदय, 'बलि कहौ, कछु है सुधि पाई?' ॥ 2 ॥

सतानंद उपरोहित अपने तिरहुति-नाथ पटाए ।

खेम कुसल रघुबीर-लषनकी ललित पत्रिका ल्याए ॥ 3 ॥

दलि ताडुका, मारि निसिचर, मख राखि, बिप्र-तिय तारी ।

दै बिद्या लै गये जनकपुर, हैं गुरु-संग सुखारी ॥ 4 ॥

करि पिनाक-पन, सुता-स्वयंबर सजि, नृप-कटक बटोर्यो ।

राजसभा रघुबर मृनाल ज्यों संभु-सरासन तोर्यो ॥ 5 ॥

यों कहि सिथिल-सनेह बंधु दोउ, अंब अंक भरि लीन्हें ।

बार-बार मुख चूमि, चारु मनि-बसन निछावरि कीन्हें ॥ 6 ॥

सुनत सुहावनि चाह अवध घर घर आनंद बधाई ।

तुलसिदास रनिवास रहस-बस, सखी सुमंगल गाई ॥ 7 ॥

(1/102)

sānuja bharata bhavana uṭhi dhā'ē.
 pitu-samīpa saba samācāra suni, mudita mātu paham'ā'ē.. 1..
 sajala nayana, tanu pulaka, adhara pharakata lakhi prīti suhā'ī.
 kausalyā liyē lā'i hr̥daya, 'bali kahau, kachu hai sudhi pā'ī?'.. 2..
 satānanda uparōhita apanē tirahuti-nātha paṭhā'ē.
 khēma kusala raghubīra-laṣanakī lalita patrikā lyā'ē.. 3..
 dali tāḍukā, māri nisicara, makha rākhi, bipra-tiya tāri.
 dai bidyā lai gayē janakapura, haim guru-saṅga sukhārī.. 4..
 kari pināka-pana, sutā-svayambara saji, nr̥pa-kaṭaka baṭōryō.
 rājasabhā raghubara mr̥ṇāla jyōm sambhu-sarāsana tōryō.. 5..
 yōm kahi sithila-sanēha bandhu dō'u, amba aṅka bhari līnhēm.
 bāra-bāra mukha cūmi, cāru mani-basana nichāvari kīnhēm.. 6..
 sunata suhāvani cāha avadha ghara ghara ānanda badhā'ī.
 tulasidāsa ranivāsa rahasa-basa, sakhī sumāṅgala gā'ī.. 7..

Good Tidings arrive from Janakpur

Verse no. 1/102—[A messenger arrived at Ayodhya from Janakpur, carrying a letter from king Janak and endorsed by sage Vishwamitra which tells about Lord Ram breaking the bow and his engagement with Sita. It also contained a formal invitation to king Dasrath to come to Janakpur with the bridegroom's party.

These messengers briefed everyone about all the developments that had occurred from the time the two brothers left with sage Vishwamitra till the time Lord Ram broke the bow and was engaged to Sita in marriage.

This was the first news of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, since they went away with the sage. Therefore, as soon as the news broke, cheer erupted and resonated in Ayodhya, and there were spontaneous celebrations everywhere.

This entire episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 287, and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Doha no. 297.]

Accompanied by his younger brother (Shatrughan), Bharat ran towards the palace (as soon as he heard that some news of his two beloved brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, has arrived from another kingdom)¹.

Then, having heard the good news from his father, he rushed happily to inform his mothers (i.e. the queen-mother Kaushalya who was Lord Ram's mother, queen Sumitra who was Laxman's mother, and his own mother Kaikeyi)² (1).

[¹Bharat and Shatrughan were playing when the messenger presented himself with Janak's letter before king Dasrath in his full court. So, as soon as Bharat heard that some good tidings about his brothers has arrived, he rushed to the court with his younger

brother. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 290.

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/101, stanza no. 4.

It ought to be noted here that there is a slight variation in who first informed the queens as narrated in Ram Charit Manas and Geetawali. Here in Geetawali it is Bharat, but in Ram Charit Manas it was king Dasrath who summoned the queens and informed them about everything. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 295.]

Tears of joy had swelled in Bharat's eyes, his body was thrilled with exhilaration, and his lips quivered in excitement. Seeing his ecstatic condition, Kaushalya embraced him and said, 'Son, bless you; is there any news?' (2).

[Bharat replied—] 'Mother! The Tirhut king (i.e. king Janak) has sent his Guru Shatanand as a messenger. He has brought a letter of good news about the welfare and happiness of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman (3).

He (Sri Ram) had crushed Tadka and slayed the demon (Subahu), protected the fire sacrifice (of Vishwamitra) and then liberated the sage's wife (Ahilya). Thereafter, he (Vishwamitra) gave them lessons (about the secret of magical weapons), and then took them on a visit to Janakpur. They (Sri Ram and Laxman) are happy there (4).

The king (Janak) had made a vow regarding the Bow (which avowed that anyone whosoever breaks this Bow would marry his daughter named Sita), and to fulfill his vow he had made elaborate preparations and arrangements of all kinds. Then he had invited a lot of great kings and princes of earth to participate in the competition to break the Bow and win the hands of Sita in marriage.

In that unique grand assembly the like of which had never been heard of anywhere, Raghubir (Sri Ram) had broken the Bow (after everyone else had failed) as if it were the stem of a lotus plant (i.e. he had broken the Bow without the least effort).' (5).

Saying thus, both the brothers were so overcome by surging emotion of affection for their beloved elder brother Lord Ram that Bharat could speak no more and fell silent.

The mother (Kaushalya) cheerfully lifted them and made them sit on her laps and repeatedly kissed them.

Then she celebrated the good tidings and the happy occasion by liberally making charities in the form of giving away attractive gems and clothes (to all those who came to her to join her in this auspicious moment)³ (6).

[³Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

Tulsidas says that as soon as these pleasant, wish-fulfilling words⁴ spread in the city of Ayodhya, auspicious felicitous songs began to be sung almost immediately in every household, while in the royal palace the maids too started to sing auspicious and celebratory songs, being overwhelmed with joy and exhilaration (7).

[⁴Every single individual in Ayodhya had hoped to hear some good news about their beloved princes Lord Ram and Laxman. So as soon as the word of the brothers' well-being and happiness spread amongst the masses, they all rejoiced at these words and a thunder of cheer rang out spontaneously everywhere.]

रागकान्हरा

(1 / 103)

राम—लषन सुधि आई बाजै अवध बधाई।
 ललित लगन लिखि पत्रिका,
 उपरोहितके कर जनक—जनेस पठाई॥ 1॥
 कन्या भूप बिदेहकी रूपकी अधिकाई,
 तासु स्वयंबर सुनि सब आए
 देस देसके नृप चतुरंग बनाई॥ 2॥
 पन पिनाक, पबि मेरु तें गुरुता कठिनाई।
 लोकपाल, महिपाल, बान बानइत,
 दसानन सके न चाप चढ़ाई॥ 3॥
 तेहि समाज रघुराजके मृगराज जगाई।
 भंजि सरासन संभुको जग जय,
 कल कीरति, तिय तियमनि सिय पाई॥ 4॥
 पुर घर घर आनंद महा सुनि चाह सुहाई।
 मातु मुदित मंगल सजै,
 कहै मुनि प्रसाद भये सकल सुमंगल, माई॥ 5॥
 गुरु—आयुस मंडप रच्यो, सब साज सजाई।
 तुलसिदास दसरथ बरात सजि,
 पूजि गनेसहि चले निसान बाजई॥ 6॥

rāgakānharā

(1/103)

rāma-laṣana sudhi ā'ī bājai avadha badhā'ī.
 lalita lagana likhi patrikā,
 uparōhitakē kara janaka-janēsa paṭhā'ī.. 1..
 kan'yā bhūpa bidēhakī rūpakī adhikā'ī,
 tāsu svayambara suni saba ā'ē
 dēsa dēsakē nrpa caturaṅga banā'ī.. 2..
 pana pināka, pabi mēru tēm gurutā kaṭhinā'ī.
 lōkapāla, mahipāla, bāna bāna'ita,
 dasānana sakē na cāpa carhā'ī.. 3..
 tēhi samāja raghurājakē mrgarāja jagā'ī.

bhañji sarāsana sambhukō jaga jaya,
 kala kīrati, tiya tiyamani siya pā'ī.. 4..
 pura ghara ghara ānanda mahā suni cāha suhā'ī.
 mātu mudita maṅgala sajam,
 kahairṁ muni prasāda bhayē sakala sumaṅgala, mā'ī.. 5..
 guru-āyusa maṇḍapa racyō, saba sāja saajā'ī.
 tulasidāsa dasaratha barāta saji,
 pūji ganēsahi calē nisāna bāja'ī.. 6..

Celebrations in Ayodhya & Departure of the Marriage Party

Verse no. 1/103— [These events are also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.]

The inhabitants of Ayodhya talked joyously among themselves—] 'Today the news of Sri Ram and Laxman has come, that is why celebratory songs are being sung in Ayodhya. Janak has sent a lovely 'Lagan-Patrika' (a letter or memo containing auspicious tidings about the day when the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita is to be solemnized) through his messenger (the royal priest of Janakpur, named Shatanand) (1).

King Videha (Janak) has a daughter who is matchless in beauty. Hearing of her 'Swyambar' (marriage ceremony where the groom is selected on the spot as per certain pre-declared conditions), the great kings of different parts of the world had come with their 'Chaturangi' armies (i.e. with all the 4 wings of their army consisting of the foot soldiers who wield spears and lancets, the archers, the war horses and elephants, and the heavy canons)¹ (2).

[¹It was an occasion when every king and prince worth his name had come. It was a rare occasion for all of them to show-off their majesty, power, strength, authority, grandeur and pomp. So everyone of them came with all their best of royal paraphernalia and regal accompaniment of grandeur and majesty. The reader can well imagine the huge crowd that must have accumulated at Janakpur at that time, and the immensity of arrangements that Janak needed to make to accommodate all of these egoistic haughty kings and their accompanying retinue of ministers, attendants, army and the like at once. They must have pitched camps on the outskirts of the city of Janakpur for miles and miles around it, but the issues of logistics and keeping all these kings in good humour must have been mind boggling. Excepting a few noble kings who were reasonable and understanding, the majority were highly egoistic, arrogant and haughty, and even a slight cause of inconvenience to them could have resulted in their throwing tantrums and itching for a showdown.]

The centre-piece of the ceremony was the unique 'Bow of Lord Shiva', the heaviness, sturdiness, invincibility and hardness of which was greater than that of Vajra (which is

the strongest weapon ever built and is held only by Indra, the king of gods) as well as Mt. Meru (the mountain where gods live).

That Bow could not be lifted and strung even by the Lokpals (the strongest and mightiest of custodians of the world), by the greatest of assembled kings, as well as by the demons Vanasur and Ravana who were both expert archers (and therefore were well-versed with the construction of a bow, and how to lift, bend and break it; even they failed) (3).

In that assembly, (by saying some acrid, instigating words) king Janak had literally woken up or aroused the 'lion of Raghu's family' (i.e. Lord Sri Ram).

By breaking the Bow of Lord Shiva, he (Lord Ram) has acquired immense glory, fame, good name and a victory like of which has never been heard of anywhere in the world, besides being rewarded by having Sita, who is a jewel among women, as his bride.' (4).

Hearing this pleasant news, celebratory and felicitous songs are being sung in every household of the city².

The mothers prepare auspicious accoutrements and paraphernalia, and say, 'Oh Ladies! All these auspicious happenings are due to the grace and kindness of the sage (Vishwamitra).'³ (5).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 296.

³It is such an irony that a while ago these same queens had been blaming the sage for all the sorrows of separation from their beloved sons they were suffering from. Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/100, stanza no. 1 herein above.]

Then, after getting the go-ahead (command, order) of the Guru (Vashishtha), the Mandap (a central canopy or a decorative pavilion for holding auspicious ceremonies) was erected wherein all types of auspicious paraphernalia and things needed for the wedding as well as the necessary items of daily use and other things needed for the long journey to and from Janakpur were collected.

Tulsidas says that Dasrath got everything arranged, and accompanied by embellished accoutrements and relevant accompaniments (befitting his stature and occasion), and then after having worshipped Lord Ganesh, the marriage party of the groom (Lord Ram) sounded the trumpets and kettle-drums and proceeded merrily towards Janakpur⁴ (6).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.]

राग केदारा

(1 / 104)

मनमें मंजु मनोरथ हो, री !

सो हर-गौरि-प्रसाद एकतें, कौसिक, कृपा चौगुनो भो, री ! || 1 ||

पन-परिताप, चाप-चिंता निसि, सोच-सकोच-तिमिर नहिं थोरी ।
 रबिकुल-रबि अवलोकि सभा-सर हितचित-बारिज-बन बिकसोरी ॥ 2 ॥
 कुँवर-कुँवरि सब मंगल मूरति, नृप दोउ धरमधुरंधर धोरी ।
 राजसमाज भूरि-भागी, जिन लोचन लाहु लह्यो एक ठौरी ॥ 3 ॥
 ब्याह-उछाह राम-सीताको सुकृत सकेलि बिरंचि रच्यो, री ।
 तुलसिदास जानै सोइ यह सुख जेहि उर बसति मनोहर जोरी ॥ 4 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(1/104)

manamēṁ maṅju manōratha hō, rī!
 sō hara-gauri-prasāda ēkatēṁ, kausika, kṛpā caugunō bhō, rī!.. 1..
 pana-paritāpa, cāpa-cintā nisi, sōca-sakōca-timira nahim thōrī.
 rabikula-rabi avalōki sabhā-sara hitacita-bārija-bana bikasōrī.. 2..
 kumvara-kumvari saba maṅgala mūrati, nṛpa dō'u dharamadthurandhara dhōrī.
 rājasamāja bhūri-bhāgī, jina lōcana lāhu lahyō ēka ṭhaurī.. 3..
 byāha-uchāha rāma-sītākō sukrṭa sakēli biranči racyō, rī.
 tulasidāsa jānai sō'i yaha sukha jēhi ura basati manōhara jōrī.. 4..

Arrival of the Groom's party at Janakpur

Verse no. 1/104—[After elaborate arrangements were made, king Dasrath and the royal priest sage Vasistha led the procession of the groom's marriage party to Janakpur to participate in the wedding ceremonies of Lord Ram and Sita. This verse narrates the happenings at Janakpur when the party arrived there.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

Seeing the groom's marriage party, the women folk of Janakpur began to talk amongst themselves—] 'Oh Dear (rī)! The pretty desire that we had in our hearts (that Lord Ram should wed Sita)¹ has not only been fulfilled but also increased four-fold², thanks to the blessings of Lord Shiva and Parvati (the patron deities of Janakpur) as well as the grace and kindness of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra—as he was the motivator who ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow when Janak had felt very depressed and low)' (1).

[¹Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/70, stanza nos. 3-8, and verse no. 1/74—to 1/83; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

²The citizens had seen Lord Ram and Laxman till now but were seeing the other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, for the first time. So they now hope that all the 'four' brothers are married together to the four princesses of Janakpur—king Janak's two daughters, viz. Sita and her younger sister Urmila, and Janak's younger brother

Kushdwhaj's two daughters Maandavi and Srutkirti. They silently prayed to Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati that since they had been so kind and gracious to have heard their initial prayer that Lord Ram should marry Sita so much so that Shiva had no objection to Lord Ram breaking his Bow, then let their one more prayer also be heard and fulfilled. And this was that all the four brothers become related to the kingdom of Janakpur by the inviolable bond of marriage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 309—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 312.]

[The lady continues to speak—] 'See friend (rī)! The gloomy darkness symbolized by the regrets and lamentations that the king suffered from at having made such a difficult and intractable vow (**pana-paritāpa**) regarding the Bow which was like a dark night when no path is visible ('**cāpa-cintā nisi**'); i.e. when Janak was so extremely perplexed that he could not think of any way out of the grave situation and dilemma that he had landed himself into with respect to the Bow), and the worries of what would now happen if the Bow remained unbroken (with respect to the future of Sita and his own reputation), were not small and easy to overcome ('**sōca-sakōca-timira nahim thōrī**'; i.e. were immensely horrifying)—but it is such a good fortune and good luck for all of us and the king as well that we, the ones who are attending this grand assembly which is like a huge pond (**sabhā-sara**), have had the good luck to be able to see ('**avalōki**'; i.e. have in our midst) the 'Sun of the Solar Race' ('**rabikula-rabi**'; Lord Ram) so much so that the Lord's sight injected cheer and joy in our minds and hearts just like the dense cluster of lotus flowers in a pond open up their petals and feel glad at the sight of the sun in the sky (**hitacita-bārija-bana bikasōrī**)¹. (2).

[¹Here, the similes are obvious. The citizens and king Janak are compared to the lotus flowers, and Lord Ram to the sun. The lotus remains closed during the night but opens as soon as the sun is sighted. The 'closed lotus' symbolizes its state of gloom and depression, and its opening its petal to it feeling cheerful and joyful.

So, as soon as the people saw Lord Sri Ram stand up from his seat to break the bow after Janak had expressed his utter dismay and frustration when none of the assembled kings could budge the Bow, the atmosphere of despair and dejection vanished, and it was replaced by one of hope, cheer, jubilation and encouragement. This is what this stanza means.]

Lord Sri Ram and other princes (i.e. his three brothers) as well as Sita and other princesses (i.e. Sita's and her three sisters) are all auspiciousness personified, and both the kings (Janak and Dasrath) are also leaders in the field of Dharma (i.e. they are both wellversed and steeped in the laws of righteousness, noble conduct, probity, propriety, ethics etc.).

Indeed this royal assembly is also very lucky that it has reaped the rewards and benefits of having eyes (eyesight) because all those present here are able to behold a personified form of all the best of virtues and glories that exist in this world at a single place, something which is an extreme rarity² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 309—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 310.]

Oh Dear (rī)! This exciting and exhilarating ceremonial occasion of the marriage of Lord Sri Ram with Sita has been created (i.e. made to happen) by the Creator by carefully selecting and gathering all auspicious, virtuous and good deeds of all the people who are participating on this happy occasion (byāha-uchāha rāma-sītākō sukr̥ta sakēli biran̄ci racyō).'

Tulsidas asserts that only those who have this lovely pair (of Sri Ram and Sita) permanently residing in their hearts can realise the immensity of exhilaration, joy and delight that everyone present on this occasion felt in their hearts (for others it is simply a narrative by a poet) (4).

(1 / 105)

राजति राम-जानकी-जोरी ।
 स्याम-सरोज जलद सुंदर बर, दुलहिनि तड़ित-बरन तनु गोरी ॥ 1 ॥
 ब्याह समय सोहति बितानतर, उपमा कहूँ न लहित मति मोरी ।
 मनहुँ मदन मंजुल मंडपमहँ छबि-सिंगार-सोभा इक ठौरी ॥ 2 ॥
 मंगलमय दोउ, अंग मनोहर, ग्रथित, चूनरी पीत पिछोरी ।
 कनककलस कहँ देत भाँवरी, निरखि रूप सारद भइ भोरी ॥ 3 ॥
 इत बसिष्ठ मुनि, उतहि सतानंद, बंस बखान करै दोउ ओरी ।
 इत अवधेस, उतहि मिथिलापति, भरत अंक सुखसिंधु हिलोरी ॥ 4 ॥
 मुदित जनक, रनिवास रहसबस, चतुर नारि चितवहि तृन तोरी ।
 गान-निसान-बेद-धुनि सुनि सुर बरसत सुमन, हरष कहै कोरी? ॥ 5 ॥
 नयननको फल पाइ प्रेमबस सकल असीसत ईस निहोरी ।
 तुलसी जेहि आनंदमगन मन, क्यों रसना बरनै सुख सो री ॥ 6 ॥

(1/105)

rājati rāma-jānakī-jōrī.

syāma-sarōja jalada sundara bara, dulahini taḍita-barana tanu gōrī.. 1..
 byāha samaya sōhati bitānatara, upamā kahum̐ na lahita mati mōrī.
 manahum̐ madana maṅjula maṇḍapamaham̐ chabi-siṅgāra-sōbhā ika ṭhaurī.. 2..
 maṅgalamaya dō'u, aṅga manōhara, grathita, cūnarī pīta pichōrī.
 kanakakalasa kham̐ dēta bhām̐varī, nirakhi rūpa sārada bha'i bhōrī.. 3..
 ita basiṣṭha muni, utahi satānam̐da, bansa bakhāna karaim̐ dō'u ōrī.
 ita avadhēsa, utahi mithilāpati, bharata aṅka sukhāsindhu hilōrī.. 4..
 mudita janaka, ranivāsa rahasabasa, catura nāri citavahim̐ tr̥ṇa tōrī.
 gāna-nisāna-bēda-dhuni suni sura barasata sumana, haraṣa kahai kōrī?.. 5..
 nayananakō phala pā'i prēmabasa sakala asīsata īsa nihōrī.
 tulasī jēhi ānandamagana mana, kyōm̐ rasanā baranai sukha sō rī.. 6..

Verse no. 1/105—[This verse describes the magnificent sight of Lord Ram and Sita while they are undertaking the various rites of marriage, such as the 'Bhanwari' mentioned in stanza no. 3 in this verse. It is a fascinating verse inasmuch as its narrator being the same happy lady who had spoken in the previous verse no. 1/104 is indicated only in its last two stanzas, i.e. nos. 5 and 6 where the word 'rī', an affectionate way of addressing one's lady friend, has been used.]

This beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Sita during the marriage rituals is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 319—to Doha no. 325 that describe the entire process of the marriage ceremony in vivid detail.]

The pair of Lord Sri Ram and Sita is gloriously present (or, making their glorious, magnificent, most exalted presence felt) in the grand assembly.

The groom is most lovely (charming, pretty, endearing) like a blue lotus or a dark rain-bearing cloud (because Lord Ram's complexion is of a dark shade), while the bride is of a fair complexion like that of lightening (i.e. which is dazzling, glowing and brilliant, signifying that Sita is most attractive and charming) (1).

At the time of the marriage ceremony, they look most magnificent and glorious under the 'Mandapam' (a specially erected canopy under which all marriage rituals are performed).

My (Tulsidas') mind fails to find an appropriate simile or comparison anywhere. It appears that beauty and splendour of the 'Sringar-Ras' (which is one of the various excellent qualities of literature) have personified themselves (in the form of Lord Ram and Sita) and have come together as a couple under the canopy (the Mandapam) into which Kamdeo/cupid (the patron deity of beauty, glamour and love) has transformed himself (2).

Both of them (Sri Ram and Sita) possess most auspicious, pretty and charming bodies (forms). They are tied to each other by the knot linking (Sri Ram's) Pitambar (that is wrapped around the Lord's body) with the Chunri (worn by Sita)¹ as they are going round and round the golden pitcher in a ceremonial ritual called 'Bhanwari'³.

Even the intellect of Saraswati (the goddess of speech, knowledge, wisdom, intellect) was confused and dumbfounded at the sight of that spectacular beauty (as she was unable to find words to describe its greatness of magnificence, its fabulous beauty and its stupendous grandeur) (3).

[¹The 'Pitambar' is the silk yellow cloth that Lord Ram usually wore. The 'Chunri' is a colourful drape covering the head and shoulders of chaste young women, a mark of modesty and chastity. It is worn by married women during all religious ceremonies.

³The 'Bhanwari' is a marriage ritual wherein one end of the groom's body-wrapping cloth is tied to an end of the bride's Chunri. Then they go around the sacred fire and ceremonial pitchers placed near it seven times to say their marriage vows. During this circumambulation, dried and puffed rice flakes are sprinkled on their path with the help of a wicker basket or plate. This ritual stands for their happy and fruitful married life, and signifies their irrevocable bond of mutual trust and love. Refer: (i) Ram Charit

Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 325, and (ii) Janki Mangal, Chanda no. 18, line no. 3.]

Sage Vashishtha on this side (representing king Dasrath and the groom's side) and sage Shatanand on the opposite side (representing king Janak and the bride's side) are lauding and singing eulogy of the greatness of the family tree of their respective patrons, enumerating the various achievements and glories of all the members of the two families.

The king of Avadha (i.e. king Dasrath) on this side (groom's side) and the king of Mithila (i.e. king Janak) on the other side (bride's side) are extremely jubilant and happy so much so that they appear to be continuously filling their laps with the ocean symbolized by the virtues of happiness, joy and bliss that continues to pour into their laps without their having enough of it (*bharata aṅka sukhāsindhu hilōrī*). (4).

Oh Dear (rī)! At this point of time, Janak is extremely glad and euphoric. The women in his household are overwhelmed with love and affection, while the clever and wise amongst the women-folk are breaking blades of reed (a gesture done to ward-off evil omens and bad spirits) and gazing intently, full of affection and endearment, at the couple (Lord Ram and Sita).

Hearing the (adulatory, laudatory) songs, the playing of kettle-drums and the chanting of hymns of the Vedas, the Gods shower flowers (from the sky)⁴. Who can ever describe those wonderful moments of jubilation and merriment? (5).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 323.]

In this way, getting the fruits (benefits, rewards) of their eyes, all the men and women folk affectionately bless the couple by invoking the grace of the Lord (Shiva) (*sakala aśīṣata īṣa nihōrī*).

Oh Dear (rī)! Those wonderful moments of happiness, joy and pleasure as well as the magnificently divine and glorious sight of the couple (Lord Ram and Sita) that has made Tulsidas' mind and heart also feel extremely exhilarated and overwhelmed with happiness and joy (*tulasī jēhi ānandamagana mana*)—say, how can the tongue (i.e. the speaker's tongue; the lady who is describing these events) ever be able to describe the dimension, the intensity and depth and excellence, of those amazing moments of joy and happiness (*kyōm rasanā baranai sukha sō*)⁵ (6).

[⁵The exhilaration, euphoria, happiness and rejoicing of that occasion were so intense and measureless like a fathomless ocean that they had numbed the mind and intellect to such an extent that the latter were paralysed and could not direct the tongue to utter a single word. It was something so divinely blissful and exhilarating that it had to be experienced and witnessed to have an idea of its intensity and depth, and not something that can be butted and bounded by words with their limited ability to transmit information or sufficiently describe them.]

घन—दामिनि बर बरन, हरन—मन सुंदरता नखसिख निबही, री॥ 1॥
 ब्याह—बिभूषन—बसन—बिभूषित, सखि अवली लखि ठगि सी रही, री।
 जीवन—जनम—लाहु, लोचन—फल है इतनोइ, लह्यो आजु सही, री॥ 2॥
 सुखमा सुरभि सिंगार—छीर दुहि मयन अमियमय कियो है दही, री।
 मथि माखन सिय—राम सँवारे, सकल भुवन छबि मनहु मही, री॥ 3॥
 तुलसिदास जोरी देखत सुख सोभा अतुल, न जाति कही, री।
 रूप—रासि बिरची बिरंछि मनो, सिला लवनि रति—काम लही, री॥ 4॥

(1/106)

dūlahā rāma, sīya dulaḥī rī!
 ghana-dāmini bara barana, harana-mana sundaratā nakhasikha nibahī, rī.. 1..
 byāha-bibhūṣana-basana-bibhūṣita, sakhi avalī lakhi ṭhagi sī rahī, rī.
 jīvana-janama-lāhu, lōcana-phala hai itanō'i, lahyō āju sahī, rī.. 2..
 sukhamā surabhi simḡāra-chīra duhi mayana amiyamaya kiyō hai dahī, rī.
 mathi mākhana siya-rāma samvārē, sakala bhuvana chabi manahu mahī, rī.. 3..
 tulasidāsa jōrī dēkhata sukha sōbhā atula, na jāti kahī, rī.
 rūpa-rāsi biracī biran̄ci manō, silā lavani rati-kāma lahī, rī.. 4..

The Glorious Pair of Rām and Sitā-2

Verse no. 1/106—The friends and handmaids of Sita cheerfully converse with each other, exclaim with joyous abandon—‘Oh dear friend (rī)! Lord Sri Ram is the groom and Sita is the bride (dūlahā rāma, sīya dulaḥī)!

Look at their beauty dear (rī). One (i.e. Lord Ram) is of a dark complexion like the shade of a dark rain-bearing cloud, while the other (i.e. Sita) has a fair shining complexion like that of the lightening (ghana-dāmini bara barana)¹.

Their beauty that extends from the tip of their toe nails right upto their heads is so astounding that it steals the attention of the beholder and keeps his mind enthralled and captivated (harana-mana sundaratā nakhasikha nibahī). (1)

[¹In other words, they are related to each other just like the dark cloud representing Lord Ram's dark complexion is to the lightening representing Sita's fair and dazzling countenance. Lightening is a part of the dark rain-bearing cloud. A cloud that has no lightening is not as dynamic and does not produce as much rain as the one in which streaks of lightening constantly shine through. Thus, here it means that both Lord Ram and Sita compliment and supplement each other. Lord Ram's glory and magnificence and majesty are enhanced by the presence of Sita by his side.]

See dear friend (rī). All our friends who are watching (sakhi avalī lakhi) the pair (of Lord Ram and Sita) attired in their full marriage regalia and decorative paraphernalia (byāha-bibhūṣana-basana-bibhūṣita) have become so exceedingly enthralled by this fabulously wonderful sight that it appears as if their mind has been captivated by it (ṭhagi sī rahī).

Verily my dear friend (rī) I say that by watching them we have got today the full fruit (reward) of taking birth and having an eye ('jīvana-janama-lāhu, lōcana-phala hai itanō'i, lahyō āju sahī'; because if we hadn't been born at Janakpur or didn't have our eyes we wouldn't have had this rare opportunity to watch Lord Ram and Sita standing side-by-side as a couple and enjoy the sight of our lifetime, nor would it have been possible for us to participate and witness this auspicious and glorious event) (2).

Oh Dear (rī)! It appears that a milkman represented by Kaamdeo ('mayana'; the patron god of beauty, charm and glamour) has 'milked' beauty, glamour, magnificence and charm from a 'milch cow' representing attractiveness, splendour and glory (sukhamā surabhi simḡāra-chīra duhi).

Then from this milk he prepared 'curd' representing the elixir of life known as 'Amrit' (nectar; here meaning the essential part of the milk representing the qualities of beauty, charm, glamour and magnificence) (amiyamaya kiyō hai dahī).

This Amrit was then churned to produce 'butter' (or cream) with which he decorated the bewitching image (form) of Lord Sri Ram and Sita (mathi mākhana siya-rāma samvārē), and the remaining part that was the 'butter-milk' (after extraction of the cream from the butter) was transformed into residual beauty (which is comparatively very dull, drab, unattractive, lustre-less and taste-less) that exists on earth (sakala bhuvana chabi manahu mahī)² (3).

[²In this metaphor Tulsidas means that Lord Ram and Sita look exceptionally beautiful and charming as if the best part of the qualities known as 'beauty, charm, attractiveness, glamour, magnificence et al' have been collected together to form the image of the couple, while the residual part of these qualities, parts that did not stand at the top and did not qualify to be called the 'best and the most excellent' were distributed to all other beautiful and lovely things that were created in this creation.

In other words, the lovely image of Lord Ram and Sita represented the epitome and pinnacle of beauty, prettiness, magnificence, attractiveness, glamour and charm. There is nothing in this world created by the Creator that can be used to compare Lord Ram and Sita with.]

Oh Dear (rī)! Even Tulsidas avers that when one sees that pair (of Lord Ram and Sita) one finds such an immensity of happiness, delight and bliss that it cannot be compared with anything ever experienced before (tulasidāsa jōrī dēkhata sukha sōbhā atula) so much so that he says that he is unable to describe its uniqueness and rarity (na jāti kahī).

Oh Dear (rī)! Verily it appears that the Creator has created them as a treasury of beauty, magnificence, splendour and attractiveness (rūpa-rāsi biracī birañci manō), while Rati and Kamdeo/cupid had only 'silā and lavani'³ in their share. (4).

[³"Silā" is the left over seeds remaining in the field after the crop is harvested, while "Lavani" is the part of the harvest which is given to labourers in lieu of money.

In other words, the best part of the Creator's "crop" symbolised by the qualities of beauty, loveliness, prettiness, charm, glamour, magnificence and majesty that was harvested (created) by him, qualities that helped him to get renown as a "Creator of good and marvellous things", and of which the Creator was proud of just like a rich farmer who derives his importance and standing in the society by the richness of his treasury (or

granary) which is filled with the best part of his crop, is represented by Lord Ram and Sita, while the residual part of the harvest (or “crop” representing beauty and other like qualities in this creation), which is not of top grade, is represented by the rest of the world.]

(1 / 107)

जैसे ललित लषन लाल लोने ।
 तैसिये ललित उरमिला, परसपर लषत सुलोचन कोने ॥ 1 ॥
 सुखमासार सिंगारसार करि कनक रचे हैं तिहि सोने ।
 रूपप्रेम-परमिति न परत कहि, बिथकि रही मति मौने ॥ 2 ॥
 सोभा सील-सनेह सोहावनो, समउ केलिगृह गौने ।
 देखि तियनिके नयन सफल भये, तुलसीदासहूके होने ॥ 3 ॥

(1/107)

jaisē lalita laṣana lāla lōnē.
 taisiyē lalita uramilā, parasapara laṣata sulōcana kōnē.. 1..
 sukhāmāsāra simḡārasāra kari kanaka racē hairṁ tihi sōnē.
 rūpaprēma-paramiti na parata kahi, bithaki rahī mati maunē.. 2..
 sōbhā sīla-sanēha sōhāvanō, sama'u kēligrḥa gaunē.
 dēkhi tiyanikē nayana saphala bhayē, tulasīdāsahūkē hōnē.. 3..

Laxman and Urmila

Verse no. 1/107—[All the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were married simultaneously at the same venue and at the same time with the four princesses of Janakpur, i.e. Lord Ram with Sita, Laxman with Sita’s younger sister Urmila (both were the daughters of Janak), Bharat with Sita’s cousin sister Maandavi, and Shatrughan with the latter’s younger sibling Srutkirti (who were daughters of Janak’s younger brother Kushdwaj). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-12 that precede Doha no. 325.

Presently, this verse no. 1/107 describes the beauty of the couple consisting of Laxman and his wife Urmila.]

Urmila is as beauteous as is Laxman who is an abode of extreme magnificence, charm, beauty and elegance. They are glancing at each other from the corners of their eyes (1).

The Creator had apparently made gold out of the essence of loveliness, beauty and ‘Sringar-Ras’ (the extract of love and beauty), and then created these two images out of that gold (tihi sōnē)¹.

One cannot therefore describe their (Laxman's and Urmila's) beautiful image (which is literally moulded from gold) and their mutual affection for each other. In fact, the mind and intellect gets tired at trying to do so, and has become silent as a consequence of its failure to describe it (2).

[¹Both Laxman and Urmila are of fair complexion, hence their comparison with 'gold'.]

At the time they went inside the 'keligriha' ('kēligr̥ha gaunē'; i.e. the site of the marriage ceremonies), the women-folk were rewarded for their eye sights by looking at the magnificent sight of the couple complete with their charm, beauty and glamour (sōbhā), their dignified behaviour and excellence of manners (sīla), and their mutual affection and love for each other (sanēha) which was very pleasing to behold (sōhāvanō).

Tulsidas asserts that now it is his turn to have the benefit of his eye sight² (3).

[Note—²It appears from this last stanza that when Laxman and Urmila sat together, the citizens were given a chance to come closer to them and offer their personal good wishes, greetings, blessings and gifts to them, as was the tradition in those days and is still prevalent now. First it were the ladies who crowded around the newly married couple to wish them a happy married life, and then the men-folk who had been eagerly waiting in a queue till the ladies were finished had their chance to come to the couple to greet them.

Tulsidas imagines that he was standing with the gentlemen to greet Laxman and Urmila, and it is clear from the wordings of this last stanza.

It ought to be recalled in this context that the majority of verses of this book Geetawali are written in the "present tense narrative" instead of the grammatically correct way of using the "past tense" as the events related to some time long long ago. But Tulsidas is not a historian or an ordinary poet; he is a devotee of the Lord God who had manifested himself as Lord Ram. A devotee feels closeness with his Lord as if the latter is right in his front, for there is no distance between the Lord and his beloved devotee, especially the Lord's chosen one as Tulsidas indeed was. So therefore, Tulsidas had mentally transported himself to that place and time in a virtual spiritual time-machine when the events of the story of the Ramayana were actually taking place, and hence his narrative is similar to a first-hand report by a scribe who is witness to the events as they unfold.

This very premise as outlined above gives authenticity and lends credence to what Tulsidas describes in all his books—for they are not heresay or a retelling of history relying on someone else's account, but a narration of the events witnessed personally by the narrator as they unfolded before his eyes.]

राग बिलावल

(1 / 108)

जानकी—बर सुंदर, माई ।

इन्द्रनील—मनि—स्याम सुभग, अँग—अँग मनोजनि बहु छबि छाई ॥ 1 ॥

अरुन चरन, अंगुली मनोहर, नख दुतिवंत, कछुक अरुनाई ।

(1/108)

indranīla-mani-syāma subhaga, am̐ga-aṅga manōjani bahu chabi chā'ī.. 1..
 aruna carana, aṅgulī manōhara, nakha dutivanta, kachuka arunā'ī.
 kaṇṇadalanipara manahu bhauma dasa baiṭhē acala susadasi banā'ī.. 2..
 pīna jānu, ura cāru, jaṭita mani nūpura pada kala mukhara sōhā'ī.
 pīta parāga bharē aligana janu jugala jalaja lakhi rahē lōbhā'ī.. 3..
 kiṅkini kanaka kaṇṇa avalī mṛdu marakata sikhara madhya janu jā'ī.
 ga'ī na upara, sabhīta namita mukha, bikasi cahūṁ' diṣi rahī lōnā'ī.. 4..
 nābhi gam̐bhīra, udara rēkhā bara, ura bhṛgu-carana-cinha sukhadā'ī.
 bhuja pralamba bhūṣana anēka juta, basana pīta sōbhā adhikā'ī.. 5..
 jagyōpabīta bicitra hēmamaya, muktāmāla urasi mōhi bhā'ī.
 kanda-taḍita bica janu surapati dhanu rucira balāka pām̐ti cali ā'ī.. 6..
 kambu kaṇṭha cibukādhara suṁdara, kyōṁ kahauṁ dasanana kī rucirā'ī.
 padumakōsa maham̐ basē bajra manō nija sam̐ga taḍita-aruna-ruci lā'ī.. 7..
 nāsika cāru, lalita lōcana, bhrakuṭila, kacani anupama chabi pā'ī.
 rahē ghēri rājīva ubhaya manō caṇṇarīka kachu hr̥daya ḍērā'ī.. 8..
 bhāla tilaka, kaṇcana kirīṭa sira, kuṁḍala lōla kapōlani jhām̐.
 nirakhahiṁ nāri-nikara bidēhapura nimi nr̥pakī marajāda miṭā'ī.. 9..
 sārada-sēsa-sambhu nisi-bāsara cintata rūpa, na hr̥daya samā'ī.
 tulasidāsa satha kyōṁ kari baranai yaha chabi niḡama nēti kaha qā'ī.. 10..

The Beauty of Lord Rām as the Groom

Verse no. 1/108—[In previous verse no. 1/106 the beauty of Lord Ram was discussed by young ladies as is clear from the use of the word “rī”—which is a friendly term of address between girls and ladies when they talk with each other—at the end of every stanza there.

But in the present verse no. 1/108, the speaker is a young lady talking to her elders because she addresses them with the word “māī” which means ‘mother’.]

‘Oh Mother (māī)! The groom of Sita (i.e. Lord Ram) is very pretty, charming and handsome.

His lovely and attractive body is dark (bluish) hued like the gem called ‘sapphire’ (indranīla-mani-syāma), while the beauty and glamour of many a Kamdeo/cupids appear to have spread over every part of his body (amṛga-aṅga manōjani bahu chabi chāī) (1).

His feet are red-coloured (aruna carana), the toes are well chiselled and attractive (aṅgulī manōhara), and the toe-nails are radiant with a slight hint (tinge) of red (nakha dutivanta, kachuka arunāī) as if ten ‘Mars’ (the red planet), who have gathered together to attend a conference (susadasi banāī), are sitting comfortably and without moving (acala) in a row on the petals of the lotus flower (kaṇṇadalanipara manahu bhauma dasa baiṭhē)¹ (2).

[¹Here, the ‘petals of the lotus’ are the feet of Lord Ram, and the toe-nails are the ten shining, red hued planet ‘Mars’ that appear to be sitting in a row on the edge of these symbolic petals as if they have been stuck to these petals to embellish them and add beauty to them just like a ‘crown jewel’ embedded at the helm of a crown adds beauty to the latter.

Another imagination is that ten great kings represented by ten planets known as Mars have gathered together to attend a conference, and they sit in a semi-circle around a large table made of red gem symbolised by the feet of Lord Ram that is additionally decorated beautifully for this special occasion. The ‘special occasion’ in this case is the Lord’s marriage.]

His knees are well-formed and muscular (‘pīna jānu’; i.e. they are not skinny and weak), and the Lord’s chest is also well-built and attractive (ura cāru).

His feet have gem-studded anklets (with tiny bells attached to them) which give out a pleasant sound as they chime and tinkle very softly (jaṭita mani nūpura pada kala mukhara sōhāī).

This sight reminds one of a row of black bees that hum around two lotus flowers full of nectar (pīta parāga bharē aligana janu jugala jalaja), and are so enamoured by the lotus and its charm that they remain engrossed in buzzing around the flower in their search for nectar (lakhi rahē lōbhāī)² (3).

[²Here, the feet of Lord Ram are the ‘two lotus flowers’, the anklets are the ‘row of black-bees that circle the lotus, the sound emanating from them is the ‘humming and

buzzing of the bees’, and the charm of the Lord’s feet is the ‘nectar’ that the bees yearn for.]

The golden waist-band tied around the Lord’s waist resembles a garland of beautiful golden lotuses (kiṅkini kanaka kañja avalī mṛdu) which had emerged in the central part of a valley of the mountain called Markat-Mani (a mountain made of emerald) (marakata sikhara madhya janu jā’ī), and being shy or afraid of looking up to see the moon (symbolised by Lord Ram’s face) (ga’ī na upara), these lotus flowers bloomed (bikasi) with their faces pointing downwards (towards the Lord’s feet) (sabhīta namita mukha)³.

This beautiful sight is so magnificent that its charm has spread in all the ten directions (cahūṁṁ disi rahī lōnā’ī)⁴ (4).

[³The waist-band has tiny bells shaped like a lotus dangling from a thread. The body of Lord Sri Ram is compared to the Mount of Emerald (“marakata sikhara”)—because it is dark coloured. The lotus-like golden tiny trinkets and bells hanging from the waist-girdle are compared here to the yellow-tinged lotus flower growing in the valley of Mt. Markatmani.

Since the tiny decorative attachments of the waist-band are dangling from a thread, they are naturally pointing downward towards the feet of Lord Ram. This sight is compared to the lotus in the valley of the mountain that point downwards because they have a soft and tender stem. Besides this, the sun is not visible due to the lofty height of the mountain, and the lotus does not point its petals skywards in the absence of a direct view of the sun. This natural phenomenon is used here by poet Tulsidas to say that the lotus are looking downwards because they feel shy of the ‘moon-like face of Lord Ram’. This is because a lotus flower cannot remain open during the night in the presence of the moon; it opens its petals only in the presence of the sun.]

His (the groom’s; Sri Ram’s) navel is deep (nābhi gambhīra); there are pretty linings (folds of skin) in the abdomen (udara rēkhā bara); and there is a mark of sage Bhrigu’s foot on the Lord’s chest, a sight that gives comfort to his devotees (ura bhrigu-carana-cinha sukhadā’ī)⁴.

The Lord’s long arms are adorned with numerous ornaments (bhuja pralamba bhūṣana anēka juta); and the Pitambar (the yellow coloured silk cloth that the Lord wears around his body) is looking extremely magnificent (basana pīta sōbhā adhikā’ī) (5).

[⁴The footprint of sage Bhrigu is marked on the chest of Lord Vishnu. This indicates that Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu himself. This sight gives comfort to his devotees because it reminds them of the tolerant, forgiving, merciful, compassionate and gracious nature of the Lord who does not mind if his devotee even hits out at the Lord in pain and anger. A brief note about this footprint is given at the end of Baal Kand, verse no. 1/26 of this book Geetawali.]

I (‘mōhi’; i.e. the lady who is describing Lord Ram’s beauty) like very much (bhā’ī) the view of the excellent and rare-looking gold-coloured sacred thread (jagyōpabīta bicitra hēmamaya) and a beautiful garland of pearls (muktāmāla) that are present on the

Lord's chest (*urasi*). They remind me of the "Bow of the King of Gods", i.e. the 'rainbow', that has formed between the cloud and the lightening (*kanda-taḍita bica janu surapati dhanu*), and a row of cranes that have also arrived at the spot (*rucira balāka pāmṭi cali āṭi*)⁵. (6).

[⁵Here, Lord Sri Ram's dark complexion is the 'cloud', the dazzling and shimmering shine of the silk of the Pitambar that the Lord wears is compared to the 'lightening around the cloud', the sacred thread is the 'rainbow' as it has many threads of different colours, and the pearl garland is the 'row of cranes or storks' that fly near this rainbow.]

His neck is like a conch ('*kambu kaṇṭha*'; i.e. it is well built and with smooth lines, and when the Lord speaks his voice is loud and clear like the sound when the conch is blown).

His chin and lips are indeed very lovely (*cibukādhara suṁdara*).

And say, how can I describe the beauty of the Lord's teeth (*kyōm kahauṁ dasanana kī rucirāṭi*) because they resemble a personified form of Vajra (diamond; '*bajra manō*') which have adopted the radiance and brilliance of a young sun as well as of the lightening, and brought these qualities with it (*manō nija samṅa taḍita-aruna-ruci lāṭi*) when it came to abide (dwell) in the central part (the thallus) of the lotus (*padumakōsa mahamṁ basē*)⁶ (7).

[⁶Here, Lord Ram's mouth with its red-hued lips is compared to the 'lotus flower with red petals', the cavity of the mouth is the 'thallus', the teeth are the 'Vajra', the red coloured lips are the 'early morning sun' which is also red-hued, and the glitter and radiance of the teeth are like the dazzle of 'lightening'.]

His nostrils are pretty (*nāsika cāru*), the eyes are pleasing and bewitching (*lalita lōcana*), the eyebrows are curved or arched (like a bow; '*bhrakuṭila*'), and the hairs on the Lord's head have been blessed with peerless beauty (*kacani anupama chabi pāṭi*) as if black/bumble-bees are surrounding two lotuses (*rahē ghēri rājiva ubhaya manō cañcarīka*) in a very hesitant and shy manner as if they are affright of it in their hearts (*kachu hrḍaya ḍērāṭi*)⁷ (8).

[⁷Here, the Lord's eyes are the 'lotus', while the eyebrows are the rows of 'black/bumble-bees' that hover over the lotus flower and cover it from top.

Lord Ram's hairs are glistening and beautiful. They dangle on his 'lotus like face' and reminds one of the 'black-bees' that sway to and fro above the lotus but are afraid to cover it completely with the 'fear' that if the lotus feels annoyed it will close its petals and deny these bees the chance to drink its nectar.]

He has a Tilak Mark on the forehead (*bhāla tilaka*), a golden tiara on the head (*kañcana kirīṭa sira*), and swaying ear-rings in the ears which cast their glow as a reflection on the Lord's cheeks (*kuṁḍala lōla kapōlani jhāmṁ*).

Seeing the most charming and bewitching image of Lord Ram, the ladies of Janakpur (*nāri-nikara bidēhapura*) were so enamoured and enthralled that they lost control of their emotions and went against the established norm of behaviour of the 'Nimi

race' (the race to which all the kings of Janakpur belonged; 'nimi nr̥pakī marajāda miṭā'ī') as they stared unblinkingly at the Lord (nirakhahim̃)⁸ (9).

[⁸The chaste women of this exalted and noble race were not expected to stare at males, let alone those who were not a member of their family. It was very indecent, immodest, uncultured and impolite to do so. But the ladies of Janakpur were so overwhelmed with affection for Lord Ram that for once they threw all precautions to the wind and enjoyed the sight of Lord Ram in all his beauty and charm.]

Saraswati ('sārada'; the goddess of speech), Sheshnath ('sēsa'; the legendary serpent with thousand hoods and tongues) and Lord Shiva (sambhu) remember the divine form of Lord Ram day and night (i.e. they meditate upon and focus their mind and intellect on the Lord; 'nisi-bāsara cintata rūpa') but still their heart is not contented with viewing this fascinating sight of the Lord in all his beauty (as described in these verses; 'na hr̥daya samā'ī').

If this is the case with them, then say how can this dude and dud (blockhead, ill-witted) Tulsidas (tulasidāsa saṭha kyōm̃ kari) describe the Lord's bewitching image or form that even the Vedas have failed to describe and finally said "Neti-Neti" about him (kyōm̃ kari baranai yaha chabi nigama nēti kaha gā'ī)⁹ (10).

[⁹The phrase Neti-neti means 'not this; not this', or 'neither this nor that'. The Vedas are the most ancient scriptures that have described even the toughest and most esoteric of metaphysical and spiritual topics because they are deemed to be the best of literature ever known to mankind as they have skilfully used the best form of language and grammar for expression. But when it came to describing the Lord, the Supreme Being, the Vedas failed because after citing all the metaphors and similes and the skills they commanded over language, words, grammar and expression they still found that the description wasn't complete. So they said 'neti-neti'—or that 'what we have said here and now is not the Lord in his entirety, and what we have said elsewhere at some other time too do not give a complete picture of the Lord' for the Lord is truly beyond comprehension!]

In this context, the reader should also refer to Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali", Baal Kand, verse no. 1/16 which expresses a similar idea. Its English version has already been published by this author.]

अयोध्या-आगमन

राग कान्हरा

(1 / 109)

भुजनिपर जननी वारि-फेरि डारी ।

क्यों तोर्यो कोमल कर-कमलनि संभु-सरासन भारी ? ॥ १ ॥

क्यों मारीच सुबाहु महाबल प्रबल ताडका मारी ?

मुनि-प्रसाद मेरे राम-लषनकी बिधि बड़ी करवर टारी॥ 2॥
 चरनरेनु लै नयननि लावति, क्यों मुनिबधू उधारी।
 कहौधौ तात! क्यों जीति सकल नृप बरी है बिदेहकुमारी॥ 3॥
 दुसह-रोष-मूरति भृगुपति अति नृपति-निकर खयकारी।
 क्यों सौँप्यो सारंग हारि हिय, करी है बहुत मनुहारी॥ 4॥
 उमगि-उमगि आनंद बिलोकति बधुन सहित सुत चारी।
 तुलसिदास आरती उतारति प्रेम-मगन महतारी॥ 5॥

ayōdhyā-āgamana

rāga kānharā

(1/109)

bhujanipara janani vāri-phēri ḍārī.
 kyōm tōryō kōmala kara-kamalani sambhu-sarāsana bhārī?.. 1..
 kyōm mārīca subāhu mahābala prabala tāḍakā mārī?
 muni-prasāda mērē rāma-laṣanakī bidhi barī karavara ṭārī.. 2..
 caranarēnu lai nayanani lāvati, kyōm munibadhū udhārī.
 kahaudhaurṁ tāta! kyōm jīti sakala nrpa barī hai bidēhakumārī.. 3..
 dusaha-rōṣa-mūrati bhr̥gupati ati nr̥pati-nikara khayakārī.
 kyōm saumpyō sārāṅga hāri hiya, karī hai bahuta manuhārī.. 4..
 umagi-umagi ānanda bilōkati badhuna sahita suta cārī.
 tulasidāsa āratī utārati prēma-magana mahatārī.. 5..

Arrival of the four Brothers with their Brides at Ayodhya-1

Verse no. 1/109—[In this ballad, mother Kaushalya expresses her astonishment at the miraculous feats that Lord Ram had done while away from home with sage Vishwamitra. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 356—to Doha no. 357.

It ought to be noted that in this version of the story of the Ramayan, Tulsidas has skipped all other details pertaining to the actual marriage ceremony, the celebrations and festivities that followed it, the way the four brothers were bid an emotional good-bye from Janakpur, the immensity of marriage gifts that Janak had given to them at the time of departure from Janakpur for Ayodhya, and the celebrations in Ayodhya itself upon arrival of the marriage party in the city and the way it was welcomed back home. All these events however have been narrated in detail by him in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Doha no. 355.]

On arrival at the palace gates of Ayodhya, the mother (Kaushalya) came out to welcome and receive Lord Sri Ram and Sita. She lovingly moved her hands on the arms and

shoulders of the Lord, saying affectionately, ‘I wonder, how you could break the heavy Bow of Lord Shiva with these tender, delicate and soft hands’¹! (1).

[¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 357.]

I wonder how you could slay the most powerful and ferocious demoness known as Tāḍakā as well as the equally powerful and ferocious demons named Mārīca and Subāhu².

God had, with the blessings of sage Vishwamitra, repulsed a grave danger to my beloved son and shielded him from the greatest of perils to which he was exposed.³ (2).

[²Actually only Tāḍakā and Subāhu were killed by Lord Ram, whereas Mārīca was simply flung away by a tip-less arrow to the middle of the far away ocean where he landed on an island. But no one could know that out of the thousands of demons who attacked and fought with Lord Ram, and were ultimately killed during the ensuing battle at the time when the Lord was protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, Mārīca was the only one to escape death and was flung away. The battle was so fierce and horrifying that no one could dare to stand there and record what happened. So for all practical purposes all the demons were deemed to have died.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 356 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.]

The mother then put some dust of Lord Sri Ram’s feet to her eyes and asked, ‘Say, how could you liberate Ahilya (munibadhū) with this dust’⁴? And how did you vanquish all the princes and marry Janki?⁵ I am indeed wonderstruck with amazement! (3).

[⁴Refer: (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/57—1/58 herein above; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 357.

The mother had heard that when her son Ram had touched a stone with his foot, it immediately converted to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. So the mother was full of wonder at this novel feat which was nothing short of a miracle for her. Being awestruck with this bit of information, she put some dust of the Lord’s feet over her own eyes out of curiosity to see what happens. But nothing happened! Why was it so that Kaushalya did not experience any divine feeling by putting the dust of Lord’s holy feet to her eyes?

The answer is very simple—Lord Ram did not want the truth of his divine powers to be revealed before all and sundry at the drop of a hat, as it were, because that would be detrimental to the main job at hand—which was to eliminate the demons, and for this it was absolutely imperative to keep a low profile lest the demons would get wind of the true identity of the Lord and run away to hide somewhere.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 357.]

Parashuram (bhr̥gupati) is an embodiment of anger and is an exterminator of kings⁶, then say how could he be subdued by you so much so that he not only surrendered before you but had also handed over his own bow to you, besides praying to you for forgiveness and mercy⁷? It’s really a wonder of wonders!’ (4).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 270; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 272.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280; and (ii) Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

Tulsidas says that joy and happiness surged and heaved in the mother's heart as she watched delightedly and affectionately all the four brothers with their respective brides. The mother performed the 'Aarti' of the newly wed couples even as she was overwhelmed with love and affection that brimmed over in her heart for them⁸.

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 348—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 349.

The 'ārati' is a formal ceremonial ritual whereby lighted earthen lamps arranged on a plate with other auspicious items such as rice grains, coloured powder, turmeric, green grass, flowers, incense, milk or curd etc. are waved before a guest to indicate that he or she is warmly welcome. It is also done as a matter of routine before an image of God or family deity on other religious occasions, festivals and ceremonies to show respect and offer worship. It is a sign for casting off evil spirits as well as praying for the well-being and happiness of the person whose āratī is done.

The way the āratī is done has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

(1 / 110)

मुदित—मन आरती करै माता ।
 कनक—बसन—मनि वारि—वारि करि पुलक प्रफुल्लित गाता ॥ 1 ॥
 पालागनि दुलहियन सिखावति सरिस सासु सत—साता ।
 देहिं असीस ते 'बरिस कोटि लागि अचल होउ अहिबाता' ॥ 2 ॥
 राम सीय—छबि देखि जुबतिजन करहिं परसपर बाता ।
 अब जान्यो साँचहू सुनहु, सखि ! कोबिद बड़ो बिधाता ॥ 3 ॥
 मंगल—गान निसान नगर—नभ आनंद कह्यो न जाता ।
 चिरजीवहु अवधेस—सुवन सब तुलसिदास—सुखदाता ॥ 4 ॥

(1/110)

mudita-mana āratī karairi mātā.
 kanaka-basana-mani vāri-vāri kari pulaka praphullita gātā.. 1..
 pālāgani dulahiyana sikhāvati sarisa sāsū sata-sātā.
 dēhīrī aśīsa tē 'barisa kōṭi lagi acala hō'u ahibātā'.. 2..
 rāma sīya-chabi dēkhi jubatijana karahīrī parasapara bātā.
 aba jān'yō sām̐cahū sunahu, sakhi! kōbida baṛō bidhātā.. 3..
 maṅgala-gāna nisāna nagara-nabha ānam̐da kahyō na jātā.

cirajivahu avadhēsa-suvana saba tulasidāsa-sukhadātā.. 4..

Arrival of the four Brothers with their Brides at Ayodhya-2

Verse no. 1/110—Mother Kaushalya is exceptionally delighted and euphoric. She liberally gives away gold, clothes, precious gems and jewels as alms and charities, and performs Arti (ceremonial showing of lamps as a token or symbol of welcome and auspiciousness) of the Lord with great affection, with a thrilled body, and a mind that is full of happiness and cheer¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 346; (ii) Doha no. 348—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 349; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 350.]

The mother teaches the brides to reverentially touch the feet of the other 700 mothers-in-law², and all of them bless them (the brides) thus—‘We bless you that your husbands live for a million years, and remain healthy throughout their lives.’ (2).

[²This statement may have two meanings: One is that king Dasrath had three chief queens—viz. Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and many more ordinary royal ladies who were part of his royal gynacium as was the custom of great kings in those ancient times. The other meaning is that Dasrath had only the above three queens, and the rest of the ladies of the royal household, such as queen’s maids and friends and other women, were all given equal respect and status as that of the queens as a noble gesture of goodwill and honour that was extended to every citizen by a wise and noble king. This fostered loyalty and a sense of belonging amongst the king’s subjects that stood him in good stead in the long run so much so that his subjects were willing to sacrifice their lives for the safety and well-being of their king who loved them as his equal.]

Seeing the pretty and charming image of Lord Sri Ram and Sita, the maids and ladies of the royal household talk with each other, saying—‘Oh Friend (sakhī)! Listen, it is now that we realise that the Creator is very clever indeed!’³ (3).

[³Why is the ‘Creator clever’? Because when he decided as fate that Lord Ram and Laxman would go with sage Vishwamitra to the forest, we were all extremely sad and worried about the safety and well-being of the two brothers, and actually we were silently cursing the Creator for creating such a destiny that forced the brothers to leave the kingdom. But come to think of it, they would not have married such beautiful princesses if they hadn’t gone, and the glory of Lord Ram and the astounding deeds he did that have now become so well-established and world-renowned and legendary would not have happened had the Lord not gone to the forest to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.

The Creator is also very clever that he arranged things in such a manner that not only Lord Sri Ram but all his other brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, too got married simultaneously. It’s such a wondrous development that it is almost dream-like.]

Auspicious songs are being sung in the city and the sky (heavens), and musical instruments of all sorts are too being played.

One cannot describe the intensity and immensity of joy, happiness, euphoria, exultation and exhilaration that swept all over on that auspicious moment and the eventful day³.

Everyone blesses that all the sons of the king of Avadh (i.e. king Dasrath), who are the bestower of happiness and joy to Tulsidas, should have a long life (4).

[³The celebrations in Ayodhya have been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Doha no. 353.]

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PART—2/Section-4

Sage Veda Vyas’

“ADHYATMA RAMAYAN”

Baal Kand — Canto 4

श्रीमहादेव उवाच

कदाचित्कौशिकोऽभ्यागादयोध्यां ज्वलनप्रभः।

द्रष्टुं रामं परात्मानं जातं ज्ञात्वा स्वमायया ॥१॥

śrāmahādeva uvāca

kadācitkauśiko'bhyāgādayodhyāṃ jvalanaprabhaḥ /
draṣṭuṃ rāmaṃ parātmānaṃ jātaṃ jñātvā svamāyayā // 1

Arrival of Vishwamitra; Departure of Ram and Laxman with him; Slaying of Tadka

1. Lord Shiva said—'Once, sage Vishwamitra, who was as radiant and brilliant with his spiritual energy as a glowing fire, realised (came to know or became aware of the fact) that the supreme Lord has manifested himself as Sri Ram (i.e. in a human form in the person of Sri Ram) using his own deluding and maverick powers called Maya. So he came to Ayodhya to have his Darshan (divine, holy viewing) (1).

दृष्ट्वा दशरथो राजा प्रत्युत्थायाचिरेण तु।

वसिष्ठेन समागम्य पूजयित्वा यथाविधि ॥२॥

अभिवाद्य मुनिं राजा प्राञ्जलिर्भक्तिमग्नधीः।

कृतार्थोऽस्मि मुनीन्द्राहं त्वदागमनकारणात् ॥३॥

त्वाद्विधा यद्गृहं यान्ति तत्रैवायान्ति संपदः।

यदर्थमागतोऽसि त्वं ब्रूहि सत्यं करोमि तत् ॥४॥

drṣṭvā daśaratho rājā pratyutthāyācireṇa tu /
vasiṣṭhena samāgamyā pūjayitvā yathāvidhi // 2
abhivādya muniṃ rājā prāñjalirbhaktinamradhāḥ /
kṛtārtho'smi munāndrāhaṃ tvadāgamanakāraṇāt // 3
tvadvidhā yadgr̥ham yānti tatraivāyānti saṃpadaḥ /
yadarthamāgato'si tvaṃ brūhi satyaṃ karomi tat // 4

2-4. Seeing him arrive at his palace, king Dashrath immediately stood up, and accompanied by Vasistha, he came forward to receive the sage. He duly worshipped him and paid his obeisance to him. Then the king folded his hands with great respect and devotion, and said prayerfully, 'Oh the most exalted sage! I have been highly obliged by your holy visit (2-3).

Every prosperity, well-being and welfare comes in the household where a great and exalted soul like you ever pays a visit. Now tell me the reason for your auspicious visit. I tell you truthfully that I shall obey your commands' (4).

विश्वामित्रोऽपि तं प्रीतः प्रत्युवाच महामतिः।

अहं पर्वणि संप्राप्ते दृष्ट्वा यष्टुं सुरान्पितॄन् ॥५॥

यदारभे तदा दैत्या विघ्नं कुर्वन्ति नित्यशः।

मारीचश्च सुबाहुश्चापरे चानुचरास्तयोः ॥६॥

viśvāmitro'pi taṁ prātaḥ pratyuvāca mahāmatih /
 ahaṁ parvaṇi saṁprāpte dr̥ṣṭvā yaṣṭuṁ surānpitṚn // 5
 yadārabhe tadā daityā vighnaṁ kurvanti nityaśaḥ /
 mārācaśca subāhuścāpare cānucarāstayoḥ // 6

5-6. Then that most wise sage Vishwamitra said, 'Whenever during the festival season (or during auspicious time), no sooner do I begin to perform the fire sacrifice in honour of Gods and dead ancestors than Marich, Subahu and their companion demons always start to defile/desecrate it (5-6).

अतस्तयोर्वधार्थाय ज्येष्ठं रामं प्रयच्छ मे।

लक्ष्मणेन सह भ्रात्रा तव श्रेयो भविष्यति ॥७॥

वसिष्ठेन सहामन्य दीयतां यदि रोचते।

पप्रच्छ गुरुमेकान्ते राजा चिन्तापरायणः ॥८॥

atastayorvadhārthāya jyeṣṭhaṁ rāmaṁ prayaccha me /
 lakṣmaṇena saha bhrātrā tava śreya bhaviṣyati // 7
 vasiṣṭhena sahāmantrya dāyatāṁ yadi rocate /
 papraccha gurumekānte rājā cintāparāyaṇaḥ // 8

7-8. Therefore, lend me your eldest son Sri Ram along with his brother Laxman so that these demons can be slayed (got rid of). This noble, honourable and valiant deed will result in great welfare for you as well (7).

Consult sage Vasistha on this subject, and if you wish, give the two princes to me'. Worried and alarmed, the king took his Guru aside and said (8)—

किं करोमि गुरोरामं त्यक्तुं नोत्सहते मनः।

बहुवर्षसहस्रान्ते कष्टेनोत्पादिताः सुताः ॥९॥

चत्वारोऽमरतुल्यास्ते तेषां रामोऽतिवल्लभः।

रामस्त्वितो गच्छति चेन्न जीवामि कथञ्चन।१०॥

प्रत्याख्यातो यदि मुनिः शापं दास्यत्यसंशयः।

कथं श्रेयो भवेन्मह्यमसत्यं चापि न स्पृशेत्।११॥

kiṃ karomi guro rāmaṃ tyaktuṃ notsahate manaḥ /
bahuvarṣasahasrānte kaṣṭenotpāditāḥ sutāḥ // 9
catvāro'maratulyāste teṣāṃ rāmo'tivallabhah /
rāmastvito gacchati cenna jāvāmi kathañcana // 10
pratyākhyāto yadi muniḥ śāpaṃ dāsyatyasaṃśayaḥ /
kathaṃ śreyo bhavenmahyamāsatyam cāpi na spr̥śet // 11

9-11.'Oh Guru! After hundreds of years, I have got these God-like four sons with great difficulty (9).

Out of them, Sri Ram is very dear to me; so what should I do now? My mind is not ready to allow me to part with him. If Sri Ram goes away from here, I shall not be able to survive (10).

But if I refuse point blank, it is certain that the sage (Vishwamitra) would cast his wrathful curse on me. So, tell me how to safeguard my interest and I am also saved from the ignominy of having to tell a lie at the same time (by cooking up an alibi or a cock-and-bull story to avoid sending Sri Ram with the sage)' (11).

वसिष्ठ उवाच

शृणु राजन्देवगुह्यं गोपनीयं प्रयत्नतः।

रामो न मानुषो जातः परमात्मा सनातनः।१२॥

भूमेर्भारवताराय ब्रह्मणा प्रार्थितः पुरा।

स एव जातो भवने कौसल्यायां तवानघ।१३॥

vasiṣṭha uvāca

śr̥ṇu rājandevaguhyam gopanāyam prayatnataḥ /
rāmo na mānuṣo jātaḥ paramātmā sanātanaḥ // 12
bhūmerbhārāvatārāya brahmaṇā prārthitaḥ purā /
sa eva jāto bhavane kausalyāyam tavānagha // 13

12-13. Sage Vasistha advised—'Oh king! Listen to a secret which should be concealed even from the Gods; it should not be divulged under any circumstances. This 'Ram' is not an ordinary human as you think him to be, but he is the eternal, absolute supreme Soul called Parmatma—who is eternal, infinite, imperishable, macrocosmic, all-pervading, all-encompassing, attribute-less, supreme Lord of all creation—who has manifested himself (by his deluding power) in this form of a human being (12).

Oh you 'Anagh' (the sinless, pure and faultless one)! In earlier times, Lord Brahma had prayed to the Lord to remove the burden of the earth caused by the demonic

forces. The Lord has taken birth in your household from the womb of Kaushalya to fulfill the promise he had made to the Gods (13).

[Note—Guru Vasistha advocates that what he is going to say be kept top secret because if the demons got any hint that the Lord has finally come to get rid of them, they would take precautionary steps, and the purpose of the Lord's visit on the earth would be defeated. The Gods had taken birth as monkeys as described earlier, but such secrets should not be divulged to anyone from the strategic point of view.]

त्वं तु प्रजापतिः पूर्वं कश्यपोब्रह्मणः सुतः।

कौसल्या चादितिर्देवमाता पूर्वं यशस्विनी।

भवन्तौ तप उग्रं वै तेपाथे बहुवत्सरम्॥१४॥

अग्राम्यविषयौ विष्णुपूजाध्यानैकतत्परौ।

तदा प्रसन्नो भगवान् वरदो भक्तवत्सलः॥१५॥

tvam tu prajāpatiḥ pūrvaṁ kaśyapo brahmaṇaḥ sutah /
kausalyā cāditirdevamātā pūrvaṁ yaśasvinā /
bhavantau tapa ugraṁ vai tepāthe bahuvarsaram // 14
agrāmyaviṣayau viṣṇupūjādhyānaikatatparau /
tadā prasanno bhagavān varado bhaktavatsalah // 15

14-15. In your previous life you were Prajapati Kashyap, the son of Brahma and the guardian of the subjects of his creation, and Kaushalya was Aditi, the famed mother of Gods. At that time, both of you had detached yourselves from worldly attachments and material objects, and had instead concentrated solely on the worship and meditation of Lord Vishnu. You had undertaken severe penances and austerities (i.e. had done Tapa) (14).

Then in due course of time, the Lord, who is magnanimous and munificent towards his devotees as well as is a bestower of boons, became pleased with you and had said, 'Be it as you wish' (15).

वृणीष्व वरमित्युक्ते त्वं मे पुत्रो भवामल।

इति त्वया याचितोऽसौ भगवान्भूतभावनः॥१६॥

तथेत्युक्त्वाद्य पुत्रस्ते जातो रामः स एव हि।

शेषस्तु लक्ष्मणो राजन् राममेवान्वपद्यत॥१७॥

vrṇāṣva varamityukte tvam me putro bhavāmala /
iti tvayā yācito'sau bhagavānbhūtabhāvanaḥ // 16
tathetyuktvādy putraste jāto rāmaḥ sa eva hi /
śeṣastu lakṣmaṇo rājan rāmamevānvapadyate // 17

16-17. At that, you had requested the Lord--'Oh the faultless and eternal one! You should become our son'. Upon this request of yours, the one who has no beginning (no past, because he is eternal and infinite) said, 'Let it be so' (16).

Hence, that same Lord Vishnu who is the Lord of the universe has presently manifested himself (as an incarnation) in the form of your son, whereas Sheshnath (the legendary serpent) has manifested himself as Laxman to serve him (17).

जातौ भरतशत्रुघ्नौ शङ्खचक्रे गदाभृतः।

योगमायापि सीतेति जाता जनकनन्दिनी॥१८॥

विश्वामित्रोऽपि रामाय तां योजयितुमागतः।

एतद्गुह्यतमं राजन्न वक्तव्यं कदाचन॥१९॥

अतः प्रीतेन मनसा पूजयित्वाथ कौशिकम्।

प्रेषयस्व रमानाथं राघवं सहलक्ष्मणम्॥२०॥

jātau bharataśatrughnau śaṅkhacakre gadābhṛtaḥ /
yogamāyāpi sāteti jātā janakanandinā // 18
viśvāmitro'pi rāmāya tāṃ yojayitumāgataḥ /
etadguhyatamaṃ rājanna vaktavyaṃ kadācana // 19
ataḥ prātena manasā pūjayitvātha kauśikam /
preṣayasva ramānāthaṃ rāghavaṃ sahalakṣmaṇam // 20

18-20. The mace-bearing Lord's (i.e. Vishnu's) conch and discus have taken birth (manifested themselves) in the form of Bharat and Shatrughan respectively, while his maverick and delusion creating powers called Maya have taken shape in the form of Sita, the daughter of Janak (18).

Presently sage Vishwamitra has come with the intention (hidden agenda) of making a union between Sri Ram and Sita possible. So, Oh king! This is a top secret; you should never divulge it (19).

(Now that you have become aware of the secret truth and the mystery behind Ram—) You should now, therefore, most cheerfully and willingly, welcome and pay your respects to sage Vishwamitra, and handover (i.e. send) Laxmi's Lord Raghav (Sri Ram) along with Laxman to him (without any further delay, demurring, doubting and dithering)' (20).

वसिष्ठेनैवमुक्तस्तु राजा दशरथस्तदा।

कृतकृत्यमिवात्मानं मेने प्रमुदितान्तरः॥२१॥

आहूय रामरामेति लक्ष्मणेति च सादरम्।

आलिङ्ग्य मूर्ध्न्यवग्राय कौशिकाय समर्पयत्॥२२॥

vasiṣṭhenaivamuktastu rājā daśarathastadā /
kṛtakṛtyamivātmānaṃ mene pramuditāntaraḥ // 21
āhūya rāmarāmeti lakṣmaṇeti ca sādaram /
āliṅgya mūrdhnavaghrāya kauśikāya samarpayat // 22

21-22. When sage Vasistha had thus explained everything to him, king Dashrath considered him self most fortunate and privileged, and with an exhilarated and cheerful mind (21), ----

----he respectfully called out 'Oh Ram, Oh Laxman'. When the two brothers came, he clasped them to his bosom, smelt their heads (as a token of deep love and affection), and then handed them over to sage Vishwamitra (22).

ततोऽतिहृष्टो भगवान्विश्वामित्रः प्रतापवान्।

आशीर्भिरभिनन्द्याथ आगतौ रामलक्ष्मणौ॥२३॥

गृहीत्वा चापतूणीरबाणखड्गधरौ ययौ।

किञ्चिद्देशमतिक्रम्य राममाहूय भक्तितः॥२४॥

ददौ बलां चातिबलां विद्ये द्वे देवनिर्मिते।

ययोर्ग्रहणमात्रेण क्षुत्क्षामादि न जायते॥२५॥

tato'tihṛṣṭo bhagavānviśvāmitraḥ pratāpavān /
āśārbhirabhinandyātha āgatau rāmalakṣmaṇau // 23
gr̥hātva cāpatūṇārabāṇakhaḍgadharau yayau /
kiñciddeśamatikramya rāmamāhūya bhaktitaḥ // 24
dadau balāṃ cātibalāṃ vidye dve devanirmite /
yayorgrahaṇamātreṇa kṣutkṣāmādi na jāyate // 25

23-25. Then the most exalted, famed, dignified and influential sage Vishwamitra honoured him (Dasrath) most cheerfully and joyously with the choicest of blessings. Sri Ram and Laxman went near the sage (23).

They were armed (adorned) with bows, quivers, arrows and swords etc. Taking them along with him, the sage departed from there. After some distance (away from the periphery of the city), Vishwamitra called Sri Ram near him most reverentially and full of devotion (24).

He gave him two special and mystical powers called 'Balaa' and 'Ati Balaa' which helped those who possessed them to overcome hunger and weakness as well as weariness and tiredness. These special skills, known as 'Vidyas', were created by the Gods and were meant for their exclusive use so that they can successfully accomplish the formidable task at hand (25).

तत उत्तीर्य गङ्गां ते ताटकावनमागमन्।

विश्वामित्रस्तदा प्राह रामं सत्यपराक्रमम्॥२६॥

अत्रास्ति ताटका नाम राक्षसी कामरूपिणी।

बाधते लोकमखिलं जहि तामविचारयन्॥२७॥

तथेति धनुरादाय सगुणं रघुनन्दनः।

टङ्कारमकरोत्तेन शब्देनापूरयद्वनम्॥२८॥

tata uttārya gaṅgāṃ te tāṭakāvanamāgaman /

viśvāmitrastadā prāha rāmaṃ satyaparākramam // 26
 atrāsti tāṭakā nāma rākṣasā kāmarūpiṇā /
 bādhate lokamakhilam jahi tāmavīcārayan // 27
 tatheti dhanurādāya saguṇam raghunandanam /
 ṭaṅkāramakarottena śabdenāpūrayadvanam // 28

26-28. Thence, they crossed river Ganges and arrived at the woods called 'Tataka forest'. Sage Vishwamitra said to the truly brave, valorous and victorious Sri Ram (26), ----

-----'A demoness named Tadka, who is able to assume any form of her choice, stays here. She tyrannises and torments all the inhabitants of this place; you must slay her without any second thoughts' (27).

Raghunandan (i.e. the exalted son born in the clan of king Raghu; here meaning Sri Ram) said 'Yes', strung his bow and pulled it. The twang sound emanating from it reverberated in the whole forest (28).

तच्छ्रुत्वासहमाना सा ताटका घोररूपिणी ।
 क्रोधसंमूर्च्छिता राममभिदुद्राव मेघवत् ॥२९॥
 तामेकेन शरेणाशु ताडयामास वक्षसि ।
 पपात विपिने घोरा वमन्ती रुधिरं बहु ॥३०॥

tacchr̥tvāsahamānā sā tāṭakā ghorarūpiṇā /
 krodhasaṃmūrcchitā rāmamabhidudrāva meghavat // 29
 tāmekena śareṇāśu tāḍayāmāsa vakṣasi /
 papāta vipine ghorā vamtā rudhiram bahu // 30

29-30. Hearing that fierce twang sound and unable to tolerate it, the ferocious and terrible-looking Tadka became mad with anger. She furiously rushed forward towards Sri Ram like a huge dark bank of doomsday cloud (29).

Immediately, he (Sri Ram) shot an arrow aimed at her bosom, at which that horrible demoness vomited/spitted a lot of blood and fell down on the ground in the forest (30).

ततोऽतिसुन्दरी यक्षी सर्वाभरणभूषिता ।
 शापात्पिशाचतां प्राप्ता मुक्ता रामप्रसादतः ॥३१॥
 नत्वां रामं परिक्रम्य गता रामाज्ञया दिवम् ॥३२॥

tato'tisundarā yakṣā sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā /
 śāpātpiśācatām prāptā muktā rāmaprasādataḥ // 31
 natvā rāmaṃ parikramya gatā rāmājñāyā divam // 32

31-32. Then Tadka, who had earlier been turned into a demoness due to a curse, was immediately liberated from her evil and sinful body due to the munificence, grace and

kindness of Sri Ram and reverted back to her original form of a fully decorated Yakshini (a demi-Goddess) adorned by various ornaments. Thereafter, she circumambulated Sri Ram, bowed before him in respect and to pay her sincere obeisance, and then went back away to the heavens by his permission (31-32).

ततोऽतिहृष्टः परिरभ्य रामं मूर्धन्यवाघ्राय विचिन्त्य किञ्चित्।

सर्वास्त्रजालं सरहस्यमन्त्रं प्रीत्याभिरामाय ददौ मुनीन्द्रः॥३३॥

tato'tihṛṣṭaḥ parirabhya rāmaṁ mūrdhanyavaghrāya vicintya kiñcit /
sarvāstrajālaṁ sarahasyamantraṁ prātyābhirāmāya dadau munāndraḥ // 33

33. Then being most thrilled and exhilarated with joy, sage Vishwamitra affectionately embraced Sri Ram, smelt his head (as a token of love and affection), and after due thought and consideration, he gave (i.e. divulged the secret art of; or revealed) to him all the arms and armaments along with their operational secrets (i.e. methods of using them) as well as the various Mantras associated with them (so that they can be invoked when the need arose and make them effective) (33).

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Baal Kand — Canto 5

Vanquishing of Marich and Subahu; Liberation of Ahilya

श्रीमहादेव उवाच

तत्र कामाश्रमे रम्ये कानने मुनिसङ्कुले।

उषित्वा रजनीमेकां प्रभाते प्रस्थिताः शनैः॥१॥

सिद्धाश्रमं गताः सर्वे सिद्धचारणसेवितम्।

विश्वामित्रेण संदिष्टा मुनयस्तन्निवासिनः॥२॥

पूजां च महतीं चक्रू रामलक्ष्मणयोर्दुतम्।

श्रीरामः कौशिकं प्राह मुने दीक्षां प्रविश्यताम्॥३॥

दर्शयस्व महाभाग कुतस्तो राक्षसाधमौ।

तथेत्युक्त्वा मुनिर्यष्टुमारेभे मुनिभिः सह॥४॥

śrāmahādeva uvāca

tatra kāmāśrame ramye kānane munisaṅkule /
uṣitvā rajanāmekāṁ prabhāte prasthitāḥ śanaiḥ // 1
siddhāśramaṁ gatāḥ sarve siddhacāraṇasevitam /

viśvāmitreṇa saṁdiṣṭā munayastannivāsinaḥ // 2
 pūjāṁ ca mahatāṁ cākṛū rāmalakṣmaṇayordrutam /
 śrārāmaḥ kauśikaṁ prāha mune dākṣāṁ praviśyatām // 3
 darśayasva mahābhāgap kutastau rākṣasādhamau /
 tathetyuktvā muniryaṣṭumārebhe munibhiḥ saha // 4

1-4. Lord Shiva continued with his narration, 'Oh Parvati! Thereafter, both the brothers along with sage Vishwamitra spent the night in the forest called 'Kamashram' which was inhabited by sages and hermits. At the crack of dawn, they proceeded from there slowly onwards on their journey (1).

They next arrived at 'Siddhashram' which was served by Siddhas (mystics; attained and expert ones) and wandering bards. The resident hermits and sages of the place, on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra (2), ----

----swiftly welcomed and worshipped Sri Ram and Laxman. After that, Sri Ram advised Kaushik (Vishwamitra) thus—'Oh sage! Engage yourself in your religious rituals (i.e. fire sacrifice) (3), ----

-----and show us where those evil demons are'. Saying 'alright', the sage started the performance of his fire sacrifice, accompanied by other sages and seers (4).

[Note—The Kamashram was a forest where desires could be fulfilled by doing Tapa, or observing austerities and doing penances, while the Siddhashram was the forest that bestowed mystical powers on those who stayed there and did Tapa.]

मध्याह्ने ददृशाते तौ राक्षसौ कामरूपिणौ।

मारीचश्च सुबाहुश्च वर्षन्तौ रुधिरास्थिनी ॥५॥

रामोऽपि धनुरादाय द्वौ बाणौ सन्दधे सुधीः।

आकर्णान्तं समाकृष्य विससर्ज तयोः पृथक् ॥६॥

madhyāhne dadṛśāte tau rākṣasau kāmārūpiṇau /
 mārācaśca subāhuśca varṣantau rudhirāsthinā // 5
 rāmo'pi dhanurādāya dvau bāṇau sandadhe sudhāḥ /
 ākarṇāntaṁ samākṛṣya visasarja tayoḥ pṛthak // 6

5-6. At about noon, two demons known as Marich and Subahu, who had the special ability to assume any form they wished, were seen raining blood and bones (on the sacrificial fire pit) (5).

The wise and intelligent Sri Ram took two arrows and mounted them on his bow, pulled the string right up to his ears and shot the arrows separately at those two demons (6).

तयोरेकस्तु मारीचं भ्रामयञ्छतयोजनम्।

पातयामास जलधौ तदद्भुतमिवाभवत् ॥७॥

द्वितीयोऽग्निमयो बाणः सुबाहुमजयत्क्षणात्।

अपरे लक्ष्मणेनाशु हतास्तदनुयायिनः ॥८॥

tayorekastu mārācam bhrāmayañchatayojanam /
 pātayāmāsa jaladhau tadadbhutamivābhavat // 7
 dvitāyo'gnimayo bāṇaḥ subāhumajayatkṣaṇāt /
 apare lakṣamaṇenāśu hatāstadanuyāyinaḥ // 8

7-8. One of the arrows spun Marich (like a top) in the sky and threw (flung) him hundreds of miles away in the ocean. This was a stupendously astounding and most astonishing feat (7).

The second arrow which was tipped with fire burnt Subahu to ashes in a second, while the rest of the demons were instantly killed by Laxman (8).

पुष्पौघैराकिरन्देवा राघवं सहलक्ष्मणम् ।
 देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुस्तुष्टुवुः सिद्धचारणाः ॥९॥
 विश्वामित्रस्तु संपूज्य पूजार्हं रघुनन्दनम् ।
 अङ्गेविवेश्य चालिङ्ग्य भक्त्या वाष्पाकुलेक्षणः ॥१०॥
 भोजयित्वा सह भ्रात्रा रामं पक्वफलादिभिः ।
 पुराणवाक्यैर्मधुरैर्निनाय दिवसत्रयम् ॥११॥

puṣpaughairākirandevā rāghavaṁ sahalakṣmaṇam /
 devadundubhayo nedustuṣṭuvuḥ siddhacāraṇāḥ // 9
 viśvāmitrastu saṁpūjya pūjārhaṁ raghunandanam /
 aṅke niveśya cālīṅgya bhaktyā vāṣpākulekṣaṇaḥ // 10
 bhojayitvā saha bhrātrā rāmaṁ pakvaphalādibhiḥ /
 purāṇavākyaairmadhurairnirnāya divasatrayam // 11

9-11. To celebrate the occasion, the Gods showered flowers on Laxman and Raghav (Sri Ram), sounded their kettledrums and trumpets, while the Siddhas (mystics) and bards began to sing their own praises in honour of the glories of Sri Ram (9). Sage Vishwamitra duly worshipped Raghunandan (Sri Ram) with great reverence, lifted him affectionately onto his laps and embraced him to his bosom, with eyes filled with tears of love, affection and devotion. [The sage was overwhelmed with affection and surging devotion; his fatherly emotions spilled over from his heart, and he felt extremely privileged, lucky and exhilarant.] (10).

Then he offered ripe fruits to Sri Ram and Laxman, told them the stories from the Purans and other scriptures, and in this way three cheerful days passed (11).

चतुर्थेऽहनि संप्राप्ते कौशिको राममब्रवीत् ।
 राम राम महायज्ञं द्रष्टुं गच्छामहे वयम् ॥१२॥
 विदेहराजनगरे जनकस्य महात्मनः ।
 तत्र माहेश्वरं चापमस्ति न्यस्तं पिनाकिना ॥१३॥

द्रक्ष्यसि त्वं महासत्त्वं पूज्यसे जनकेन च।

इत्युक्त्वा मुनिभिस्ताभ्यां ययौ गङ्गासमीपगम्।१४॥

गौतमस्याश्रमं पुण्यं यत्राहल्यास्थिता तपः।

दिव्यपुष्पफलोपेतपादपैः परिवेष्टितम्।१५॥

caturthe'hani saṁprāpte kauśiko rāmamabravāt /
rāma rāma mahāyajñam draṣṭuṁ gacchāmahe vayam // 12
videharājānagare janakasya mahātmanah /
tatra māheśvaram cāpamasti nyastam pinākinā // 13
drakṣyasi tvaṁ mahāsattvaṁ pūjyase janakena ca /
ityuktvā munibhistābhyāṁ yayau gaṅgāsamāpagam // 14
gautamasyāśramam puṇyam yatrāhalyāsthitā tapaḥ /
divyapuṣpaphalopetapādapaiḥ pariveṣṭitam // 15

12-15. On the fourth day, Kaushik (Vishwamitra) told the Lord, 'Oh Sri Ram! We shall go to Janakpur to see a great 'Yagya' (a ceremonial, religious get together) (12). There is a very huge, strong and formidable bow called Pinak, belonging to Lord Shiva, kept there (13).

You shall see that strong and sturdy bow, and king Janak shall duly welcome and show respect and honour to you'. Having said so, sage Vishwamitra, along with other sages, Sri Ram and Laxman came to the hermitage of the most exalted sage Gautam near the river Ganges. It was full of trees bearing divine and auspicious fruits, and Ahilya (the wife of the sage) was doing severe penances and austerities (Tapa) there (14-15).

मृगपक्षिगणैर्हीनं नानाजन्तुविवर्जितम्।

दृष्ट्वोवाच मुनिं श्रीमान् रामो राजीवलोचनः।१६॥

कस्यैतदाश्रमपदं भाति भास्वच्छुभं महत्।

पत्रपुष्पफलैर्युक्तं जन्तुभिः परिवर्जितम्।१७॥

आह्लादयति मे चेतो भगवन् ब्रूहि तत्त्वतः।१८॥

mṛgapakṣigaṇairhānam nānājantuvivarjitam /
drṣṭvovāca munim śrāmān rāmo rājāvalocanaḥ // 16
kasyaitadāśramapadam bhāti bhāsvacchubham mahat /
patrapuṣpaphalairyuktam jantubhiḥ parivarjitam // 17
āhlādayati me ceto bhagavan brūhi tattvataḥ // 18

16-18. Seeing that hermitage devoid of any form of life, such as animals, birds or any other type of living creature, the lotus-eyed Sri Ram asked the sage the reason for it (16),

----'Whose hermitage is this which is endowed with leaves, flowers and fruits but is totally lacking in any living being, and which appears intrinsically to be very beautiful, attractive, auspicious and pure? Oh Lord, seeing it, my mind and intellect seems to be very delighted, enchanted and pleased; so please tell me all about it' (17-18).

श्रीविश्वामित्र उवाच

शृणु राम पुरा वृत्तं गौतमो लोकविश्रुतः।
 सर्वधर्मभृतां श्रेष्ठस्तपसाराधयन् हरिम् ॥१९॥
 तस्मै ब्रह्मा ददौ कन्यामहल्यां लोकसुन्दरीम्।
 ब्रह्मचर्येण सन्तुष्टः शुश्रूषणपरायणाम् ॥२०॥
 तया सार्धमिहावात्सीद्वौतमस्तपतां वरः।
 शक्रस्तु तां धर्षयितुमन्तरं प्रेप्सुरन्वहम् ॥२१॥

śrāviśvāmitra uvāca

śṛṇu rāma purā vṛttam gautamo lokaviśrutaḥ /
 sarvadharmabhṛtāṃ śreṣṭhastapasārādhayan harim // 19
 tasmai brahmā dadau kanyāmahalyāṃ lokasundarām /
 brahmacaryeṇa santuṣṭaḥ śuśrūṣaṇaparāyaṇām // 20
 tayā sārddhamihāvatsādgautamastapatām varaḥ /
 śakrastu tāṃ dharṣayitumantaram prepsuranvahaṃ // 21

19-21. Sage Vishwamitra replied, 'Oh Sri Ram, listen to the earlier history of this hermitage. The world famous, most exalted and religious minded pious sage Gautam used to live here and worshipped Sri Hari (Vishnu) by offering austerities and penances to him (19).

Pleased by his celibacy and austerities, Brahma gave him a girl name Ahilya—who was the most beautiful in the world and very diligent and sincere in her duties—to serve him (20).

Gautam, who was most proficient in penances and austerities, stayed here with Ahilya. On the other hand, the Lord of Gods, Indra, was infatuated by her bewitching beauty, charm and glamour. He coveted her lasciviously and was on the lookout for an opportunity to have sex with her (21).

कदाचिन्मुनिवेषेण गौतमे निर्गते गृहात्।
 धर्षयित्वाथ निरगात्वरितं मुनिरप्यगात् ॥२२॥
 दृष्ट्वा यान्तं स्वरूपेण मुनिः परमकोपनः।
 पप्रच्छ कस्त्वं दुष्टात्मन् मम रूपधरोऽधमः ॥२३॥
 सत्यं ब्रूहि न चेद्भस्म करिष्यामि न संशयः।
 सोऽब्रवीदेवराजोऽहं पाहि मां कामकिङ्करम् ॥२४॥

kadācinmuniveṣeṇa gautame nirgate gṛhāt /
 dharṣayitvātha niragāttvaritaṃ munirapyagāt // 22
 dr̥ṣṭvā yāntaṃ svarūpeṇa muniḥ paramakopanaḥ /

papraccha kastvaṃ duṣṭātmanmama rūpadharo'dhamah // 23
 satyaṃ brūhi na cedbhasma kariṣyāmi na saṃśayaḥ /
 so'bravāddevarājo'haṃ pāhi mām kāmakinkaram // 24

22-24. Once, when sage Gautam had gone out of the hermitage, he assumed a fictitious form of the sage, had intercourse with her and left in a hurry. But the sage also came there at that moment (22).

Seeing him fleeing from there disguised as himself, Gautam became furious, and most angrily demanded—'Oh you wicked soul! Oh you lowly and depraved evil rascal! Who are you to have disguised yourself as me (or, have assumed my form)? (23).

Tell me the truth—otherwise I shall reduce you to ashes immediately. Do not doubt about it'. Then Indra, caught on the back foot, said, 'Oh Lord! I am Indra, but I was overcome with lust and passion. Save me (or have mercy on me) (24).

कृतं जुगुप्सितं कर्म मया कुत्सितचेतसा।

गौतमः क्रोधताम्राक्षः शशाप दिविजाधिपम्॥२५॥

योनिलम्पट दुष्टात्मन्सहस्रभगवान्भव।

शप्त्वा तं देवराजानं प्रविश्य स्वाश्रमं द्रुतम्॥२६॥

दृष्ट्वाहल्यां वेपमानां प्राञ्जलिं गौतमोऽब्रवीत्।

दुष्टे त्वं तिष्ठ दुर्वृत्ते शिलायामाश्रमे मम॥२७॥

kṛtaṃ jugupsitaṃ karma mayā kutsitacetasā /
 gautamaḥ krodhatāmrākṣaḥ śaśāpa divijādhipam // 25
 yonilampaṭa duṣṭātmansahasrabhagavānbhava /
 śaptvā taṃ devarājānaṃ praviśya svāśramaṃ drutam // 26
 drṣṭvāhalyāṃ vepamānāṃ prāñjaliṃ gautamo'bravāt /
 duṣṭe tvaṃ tiṣṭha durvṛtte śilāyāmāśrame mama // 27

25-27. This sinful one has done a very heinous, ignoble and reprehensible deed'. Then Gautam's eyes turned red with anger and he cursed Indra (25), ----

----'Oh you wicked, pervert soul! You are infatuated (attracted) to a vagina, so let your body have hundred holes'. Having cursed the king of Gods, the sage entered his hermitage to find Ahilya completely taken aback, and shaking with fear, she stood with palms joined together in submission. Seeing her, Gautam cursed her, 'Oh you wicked one! You should live in my Ashram (hermitage) as a lifeless stone (a boulder or rock) (26-27).

निराहारा दिवारात्रं तपः परममास्थिता।

आतपानिलवर्षादिसहिष्णुः परमेश्वरम्॥२८॥

ध्यायन्ती राममेकाग्रमनसा हृदि संस्थितम्।

नानाजनतुविहीनोऽयमाश्रमो मे भविष्यति॥२९॥

nirāhārā divārātraṃ tapaḥ paramamāsthitā /

ātapānilavarṣādisahiṣṇuḥ parameśvaram // 28
 dhyāyantā rāmamekāgramanasā hr̥di samsthitam /
 nānājantuvihāno'yamāśramo me bhaviṣyati // 29

28-29. Perform Tapa (severe austerities and penances) here night and day without food, coping with the sun, wind and rain, and concentrate on Lord Ram who resides in your heart (as your pure consciousness and Atma). From now onwards, this Ashram of mine shall be devoid of all living creatures (and shall become desolate for all practical purposes) (28-29).

एवं वर्षसहस्रेषु ह्यनेकेषु गतेषु च ।
 रामो दाशरथिः श्रीमानागमिष्यति सानुजः ॥३०॥
 यदा त्वदाश्रयशिलां पादाभ्यामाक्रमिष्यति ।
 तदैव धूतपापा त्वं रामं संपूज्य भक्तितः ॥३१॥
 परिक्रम्य नमस्कृत्य स्तुत्वा शापाद्विमोक्ष्यसे ।
 पूर्ववन्मम शुश्रूषां करिष्यसि यथासुखम् ॥३२॥

evaṃ varṣasahasreṣu hyanekeṣu gateṣu ca /
 rāmo dāśarathiḥ śrāmānāgamiṣyati sānujaḥ // 30
 yadā tvadāśrayaśilāṃ pādābhyāmākramiṣyati /
 tadaiva dhūtapāpā tvam rāmaṃ sampūjya bhaktitaḥ // 31
 parikramya namaskṛtya stutvā śāpādvimokṣyase /
 pūrvavanmama śuśrūṣāṃ kariṣyasi yathāsukham // 32

30-32. After the passage of many thousand years, Dasrath's son Sri Ram, along with his brother Laxman, shall come here (30).

When he (Sri Ram) will put his feet on the stone (rock), which shall be your form (or refuge) till that moment, you will be freed from your sins and consequences of your misdemeanours. You shall then worship Sri Ram with due reverence and devotion (31), -

----circumambulate him, bow before him to pay your obeisance, praise and honour him, and thereby get yourself absolved of this curse. Thereafter, you shall again be able to serve me most happily as you had been doing till today' (32).

इत्युक्त्वा गौतमः प्रागाद्धिमवन्तं नगोत्तमम् ।
 तदाद्यहल्या भूतानामदृश्या स्वाश्रमे शुभे ॥३३॥
 तव पादरजःस्पर्शं कांक्षते पवनाशना ।
 आस्तेऽद्यापि रघुश्रेष्ठ तपो दुष्करमास्थिता ॥३४॥

ityuktvā gautamaḥ prāgāddhimavantam nagottamam /
 tadādyahalyā bhūtānāmadr̥śyā svāśrame śubhe // 33
 tava pādarajaḥsparśam kāṅkṣate pavanāśanā /

āste'dyāpi raghuśreṣṭha tapo duṣkaramāsthītā // 34

33-34. Saying thus, the most exalted sage Gautam went to the Himalaya which is the best amongst the mountains. Oh the best in the clan of Raghu (i.e. Sri Ram)! Ever since that day, Ahilya has survived eating air and doing severe penances with the hope that one day you would touch her with your holy feet. She has lived without any contact with any living creature for all this long while in this auspicious but desolate hermitage (33-34).

पावयस्व मुनेर्भार्यामहल्यां ब्रह्मणः सुताम्।

इत्युक्त्वा राघवं हस्ते गृहीत्वा मुनिपुङ्गवः॥३५॥

दर्शयामास चाहल्यामुग्रेण तपसा स्थिताम्।

रामः शिलां पदा स्पृष्ट्वा तां चापश्यत्तपोधनाम्॥३६॥

pāvayasva munerbhāryāmahalyām brahmaṇaḥ sutām /

ityuktvā rāghavaṃ haste gr̥hātvā munipuṅgavaḥ // 35

darśayāmāsa cāhalyāmugreṇa tapasā sthitām /

rāmaḥ śilāṃ padā spr̥ṣṭvā tāṃ cāpaśyattapodhanām // 36

35-36. Now you should provide liberation to the daughter of Brahma and the wife of Gautam, namely Ahilya'. Saying this, sage Vishwamitra held Raghav (Sri Ram) by his hand and showed him Ahilya who was steeped and engrossed in doing severe penances and austerities. Then Sri Ram touched that stone (boulder or rock) with his holy feet and looked at Ahilya who was engaged in deep contemplation and meditation (35-36).

ननाम राघवोऽहल्यां रामोऽहमिति चाब्रवीत्।

ततो दृष्ट्वा रघुश्रेष्ठं पीतकौशेयवाससम्॥३७॥

चतुर्भुजं शङ्खचक्रगदापङ्कजधारिणम्।

धनुर्बाणधरं रामं लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितम्॥३८॥

स्मितवक्त्रं पद्मनेत्रं श्रीवत्साङ्कितवक्षसम्।

नीलमाणिक्यसङ्काशं द्योतयन्तं दिशो दश॥३९॥

nanāma rāghavo'halyām rāmo'hamiti cābravāt /

tato dṛṣṭvā raghuśreṣṭhaṃ pātakaśeyavāsasam // 37

caturbhujam śaṅkhacakraḡadāpaṅkajadhāriṇam /

dhanurbāṇadharam rāmaṃ lakṣmaṇena samanvitam // 38

smitavaktraṃ padmanetraṃ śrāvatsāṅkitavakṣasam /

nālamāṇikyasaṅkāśam dyotayantaṃ diśo daśa // 39

37-39. Seeing her, Raghav (Sri Ram) said 'I am Ram' and bowed before her respectfully. Then Ahilya looked at the one who was the best in Raghu's clan (Sri Ram) and was wearing a silk Pitambar (37).

His four arms were adorned by a conch, discus, mace and lotus respectively, a bow and arrow were slung on his shoulders, and he was accompanied by Laxman (38).

His face had a bewitching enigmatic smile, eyes were beautiful like lotus flowers, and the chest was adorned by the foot print of sage Brighu, called Sri Vatsa. All the ten directions of the world were being lighted (illuminated) by the radiance and glow effusing from his dark complexioned form (image, body) which resembled a ‘Neel Mani’ (a blue gem—sapphire) (39).

दृष्ट्वा रामं रमानाथं हर्षविस्फारितेक्षणा ।

गौतमस्य वचः स्मृत्वा ज्ञात्वा नारायणं वरम् ॥४०॥

संपूज्य विधिवद्राममर्घ्यादिभिरनिन्दिता ।

हर्षाश्रुजलनेत्रान्ता दण्डवत्प्रणिपत्य सा ॥४१॥

उत्थाय च पुनर्दृष्ट्वा रामं राजीवलोचनम् ।

पुलकाङ्कितसर्वाङ्गा गिरा गद्गदयैलत ॥४२॥

dr̥ṣṭvā rāmaṃ ramānāthaṃ harṣavisphāritekṣaṇā /
gautamasya vacaḥ smṛtvā jñātvā nārāyaṇaṃ param // 40
saṃpūjya vidhivadrāmamarghyāḍibhiraninditā /
harṣāśrujalanetrāntā daṇḍavatpraṇipatya sā // 41
utthāya ca punardṛṣṭvā rāmaṃ rājāvalocanam /
pulaṅkāṅkitasarvāṅgā girā gadgadayailata // 42

40-42. Seeing Sri Ram who is the Lord of Laxmi (Ramanath is one of the names of Lord Vishnu; literally meaning the Lord of Laxmi), the eyes of Ahilya lit up with joy and delight, and she recalled the words of sage Gautam. Recognising (or realising) that he (Sri Ram) was Lord Narayan (Vishnu) himself (40), ----

----that un-blemished, untainted, pure and faultless lady worshipped and adored him by offering oblations etc., and prostrated before him with eyes welling up with tears of extreme joy, thanksgiving and happiness (41).

Then she stood up, and seeing the lotus-eyed Sri Ram standing in front of her, her whole body was thrilled, and she began to praise him and sing his glories as follows (42)—

अहल्योवाच

अहो कृतार्थास्मि जगन्निवास ते पादाब्जसंलग्नरजः कणादहम् ।

स्पृशामि यत्पद्मजशङ्करादिभिर्विमृग्यते रन्धितमानसैः सदा ॥४३॥

ahalyovāca

aho kṛtārthāsmi jagannivāsa te pādābjaśaṃlagnarajaḥkaṇādaham /
spr̥śāmi yatpadmajasaṅkarādibhirvimṛgyate randhitamānasaiḥ sadā // 43

43. Ahilya said, 'Oh the abode (refuge, shelter) of this whole world (creation)! I have become highly obliged, fortunate and privileged by having got the touch of the dust of your feet. Oh! It is a matter of great luck that I am touching those holy feet of yours which are the subject matter of constant contemplation and enquiry by Lords Brahma and Shiva themselves (43).

अहो विचित्रं तव राम चेष्टितं मनुष्यभावेन विमोहितं जगत्।

चलस्यजस्रं चरणादिवर्जितः सम्पूर्ण आनन्दमयोऽतिमायिकः॥४४॥

aho vicitraṃ tava rāma ceṣṭitaṃ manuṣyabhāvena vimohitaṃ jagat /
calasyajasraṃ caraṇādivarjitaḥ sampūrṇa ānandamayo'timāyikaḥ // 44

44. Oh Sri Ram! Your maverick sports and deceptive playful activities are very mysteries and strange; the whole world is in thrall and under the deluding spell of your human-like behaviour. You are an embodiment of complete bliss, peace and tranquility, and are empowered with the illusion-creating, magical powers, because inspite of being without a feet, you always keep on moving (44).

यत्पादपङ्कजपरागपवित्रगात्रा भागीरथी भवविरिञ्चिमुखान्पुनाति।

साक्षात्स एव मम दृग्विषयो यदास्ते किं वर्ण्यते मम पुराकृतभागधेयम्॥४५॥

yatpādapaṅkajaparāgapavitragātrā

bhāgārathā bhavaviriñcimukhānpunāti /

sākṣātsa eva mama drgviṣayo yadāste

kiṃ varṇyate mama purākṛtabhāgadheyam // 45

45. He, the nectar of whose holy feet purifies (or endows with purity, sanctity, holiness, sacredness) the waters of river Ganges (Bhagirathi) which in turn becomes potent enough to purify (or make holy, endow with divinity and sacredness) even Shiva, Brahma and other Lords of the universe—today the same holy and divine feet have become the object (of adoration and reverential viewing) of my eyes. (I feel so honoured, obliged, privileged and exhilarated that) I do not know how to describe my past good deeds (and their good effects)? (45).

मर्त्यावतारे मनुजाकृतिं हरिं रामाभिधेयं रमणीयदेहिनम्।

धनुर्धरं पङ्कजालोचनं भजामि नित्यं न परान्भजिष्ये॥४६॥

martyāvatare manujākṛtiṃ hariṃ rāmābhidheyam ramaṇāyadehinam /

dhanurdharam padmaviśālalocanam bhajāmi nityaṃ na parānbhajiṣye // 46

46. I worship and constantly remember or meditate upon Sri Ram who holds a bow, is lotus-eyed, and is the supreme Lord Hari (Vishnu) who has incarnated (revealed) himself

in a human form in this mortal world. Except him, I do not wish to worship, adore, honour or meditate upon anyone else (46).

यत्पादपङ्कजरजः श्रुतिभिर्विमृग्यं यन्नाभिपङ्कजभवः कमलासनश्च ।
यन्नामसारसिको भगवान्पुरारिस्तं रामचन्द्रमनिशं हृदि भावयामि ॥४७॥

yatpādapaṅkajarajaḥ śrutibhirvimrgyaṁ
yannābhipaṅkajabhavaḥ kamalāsanaśca /
yannāmasārasiko bhagavānpurāristaṁ
rāmacandramaniśaṁ hṛdi bhāvayāmi // 47

47. I contemplate and meditate upon Sri Ram, the dust of whose lotus-like feet are much sought after even by the Vedas. Even Brahma has manifested himself from the lotus emerging from his navel, and Lord Shiva is intoxicated by, and is an admirer of, the nectar of his holy name (47).

यस्यावतारचरितानि विरिञ्चिलोके गायन्ति नारदमुखा भवपद्मजाद्याः
आनन्दजाश्रुपरिषिक्तकुचागसीमा वागीश्वरी च तमहं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥४८॥

yasyāvatāracaritāni viriñciloke
gāyanti nāradamukhā bhavapadmajādyāḥ /
ānandajāśrupariṣiktakucāgrasāmā
vāgāśvarā ca tamahaṁ śaraṇaṁ prapadye // 48

48. I take refuge (shelter) in the holy feet of the Lord. The worldly activities (i.e. playful sports) which he undertook during his incarnation are being constantly sung and lauded in the heavens by sage Narad and other celestial sages, Lords Brahma, Shiva and other Lords of Gods, as well as by Saraswati (the goddess of knowledge and wisdom) whose bosom is wet by tears of exhilaration, extreme joy and bliss flowing down from her eyes (48).

सोऽयं परात्मा पुरुषः पुराण एकः स्वयंज्योतिरनन्त आद्यः ।
मायातनुं लोकविमोहनीयां धत्ते परानुग्रह एष रामः ॥४९॥

so'yaṁ parātmā puruṣaḥ purāṇā ekaḥ svayaṁjyotirananta ādyaḥ /
māyātanuṁ lokavimohanāyāṁ dhatte parānugraha eṣa rāmaḥ // 49

49. That supreme, transcendental Lord, who is one and the only one, who is famed in the Purans as the self-illuminated, eternal and infinite ancient one who was there even at the beginning of creation, has assumed an illusionary human form, using his own delusion creating maverick powers called Maya, to show his profound graciousness, munificence, magnanimity, benediction and benevolence on this world. This human form of the Lord

is most captivating, enthralling, charming and pleasant, so much so that it holds the entire world in its thrall and keeps it spellbound (49).

[Note—The Lord decided to oblige his devotees by taking a birth so that they can sing his divine deeds and stories associated with him, and though they may not be enough intellectually evolved to understand the Vedas and other scriptures and obtain liberation and deliverance from this entrapping world of birth and death, they will still have the same benefit by singing his glories as Ram. Again, the Lord would be able to fulfill the desires of those devotees who wish to see him in a visible form that they can worship and adore. Further, the Lord would use this opportunity to preach the glories tenets of the scriptures himself, as is evident with this particular Ramayan which is packed with spiritual wisdom and philosophy. Simultaneously, the Lord wished to set practical guidelines for day to day behaviour of creatures in the world, which he could do only if he became one like them and lived with them, suffering and enjoying the horrors and comforts of the world like them. Then he would be able to show them in practical terms how to act and behave in similar situations. But, since he is an embodiment of, a personification of the supreme Brahm, he would not at all be affected and tarnished by this birth as a human.

He made himself so bewitchingly beautiful to ensure that the mortal creatures, who are so enamoured by physical beauty, would at least look up at him, pay attention to him, and keep looking at him so much so that in due course of time they begin to treat him as their idol of admiration and icon of worship. The whole exercise would have failed miserably if the Lord had assumed an ugly form that all loathed to see and to talk with, what to emulate and remember.]

अयं हि विश्वोद्भवसंयमानामेकः स्वमायागुणविम्बितो यः।

विरिञ्चिविष्ण्वीश्वरनामभेदान् धत्ते स्वतन्त्रः परिपूर्ण आत्मा ॥५०॥

ayaṃ hi viśvodbhavasamyamānāmekah svamāyāguṇabimbīto yaḥ /
viriñciviṣṇvāśvaranāmabhedān dhatte svatantraḥ paripūrṇa ātmā // 50

50. You are the independent, all-complete and self-sustained supreme Soul of creation (“paripūrṇa ātmā”; known as the ‘Parmatma’) which assumes different forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with the help of its own stupendous powers of creation called Maya, along with its various virtues and qualities called ‘Gunas’, for the express purpose of creation, sustenance and dissolution of this creation respectively (50).

नमोऽस्तु ते राम तवाङ्घ्रिपङ्कजं श्रिया धृतं वक्षसि ललितं प्रियात्।

आक्रान्तमेकेन जगत्त्रयं पुरा ध्येयं मुनीन्द्रैरभिमानवर्जितैः ॥५१॥

namo'stu te rāma tavāṅghripaṅkajaṃ
śriyā dhṛtaṃ vakṣasi lālitaṃ priyāt/
ākṛāntamekena jagattrayaṃ purā
dhyeyaṃ munāndhairabhimānavarjitaiḥ// 51

51. Oh Sri Ram! I bow and pay my obeisance to your holy lotus-feet which are affectionately served and adored by Laxmi by keeping them on her bosom, which had in an earlier time (during the dwarf mendicant incarnation to vanquish Vaali) measured the 3 worlds called the 'Triloki' (meaning the terrestrial, celestial and subterranean worlds) by a single step, and which are constantly meditated upon by wise and enlightened sages, hermits and seers (51).

जगतामादिभूतस्त्वं जगत्त्वं जगदाश्रयः।

सर्वभूतेष्वसंयुक्त एको भाति भवान्परः॥५२॥

ओंकारवाच्यस्त्वं राम वाचामविषयः पुमान्।

वाच्यावाचकभेदेन भवानेव जगन्मयः॥५३॥

jagatāmādibhūtastvaṃ jagattvaṃ jagadāśrayaḥ /
sarvabhūteṣvasaṃyukta eko bhāti bhavānparaḥ // 52
omkāravācyastvaṃ rāma vācāmaviṣayaḥ pumān /
vācyavācakabhedenā bhavāneva jaganmayaḥ // 53

52-53. Oh Lord! You are the primordial cause of, the embodiment of, and the only shelter of the world. The entire creation made up of the 'Bhuts' (the primary elements of creation, such as earth, water, fire, air and space) is incorporated in your macrocosmic form. In spite of that, you are distinct and independent from all the creatures, and are radiant with the divine glow of the matchless supreme Brahm of whom you are an embodiment (52).

Oh Sri Ram! You are the eternal and imperishable word represented by the divine word 'OM', and are the invisible, un-manifest supreme Purush (macrocosmic soul) which is beyond the purview of the faculty of speech (i.e. speech cannot define and describe you in any way). Even as the same word has many interpretations and uses, you too have assumed the form of this entire world depending upon how it is perceived. [That is, like the word having different meanings and usage, the same entity known as Brahm has been known in different ways by different persons. This has resulted in so much dichotomy and schisms in this world. But upon close examination one finds that the essence is the same and one even as the same word, when applied in different context, assumes a different meaning.] (53).

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वफलसाधनभेदतः।

एको विभासि राम त्वं मायया बहुरूपया॥५४॥

त्वन्मायामोहितधियस्त्वां न जानन्ति तत्त्वतः।

मानुषं त्वाभिमन्यन्ते मायिनं परमेश्वरम्॥५५॥

kāryakāraṇakartṛtvaphalasādhanabhedataḥ /
eko vibhāsi rāma tvaṃ māyayā bahurūpayā // 54
tvanmāyāmohitadhiyastvāṃ na jānanti tattvataḥ /

mānuṣaṃ tvābhimanyante māyinaṃ parameśvaram // 55

54-55. Oh Sri Ram! You yourself manifest (i.e. appear, reveal) in multifarious forms with the help (aid, use) of your multi-faceted, powerful, mystical and maverick powers called Maya, creating or doing various deeds, becoming reasons/causes for those duties/imperatives/obligations, their results/rewards/fruits as well as resources/aids/instruments required to fulfill them or carry them out (54).

Those people whose mind, intellect and discriminatory faculties are held in thrall by your deluding and magical powers can never realise (or come to know) their real, truthful nature and form. Those idiots and block-heads think that you—who are the Lord of all delusions and are the supreme Soul and Lord of creation—are an ordinary human being (55).

आकाशवत्त्वं सर्वत्र बहिरन्तर्गतोऽमलः।

असङ्गो ह्यचलो नित्यः शुद्धो बुद्धः सदव्ययः॥५६॥

योषिन्मूढाहमज्ञा ते तत्त्वं जाने कथं विभो।

तस्मात्ते शतशो राम नमस्कुर्यामनन्यधीः॥५७॥

ākāśavattvaṃ sarvatra bahirantargato'malaḥ /
asaṅgo hyacalo nityaḥ śuddho buddhaḥ sadavyayaḥ // 56
yoṣinmūḍhāhamajñā te tattvaṃ jāne kathaṃ vibho /
tasmātte śataśo rāma namaskuryāmananyadhāḥ // 57

56-57. You are present both inside and outside of everything like the space or sky that covers everything from the outside and is present inside it as well. You are pristine pure, immaculate, uncorrupt, and without any blemishes and faults. You are all alone, remain detached, dispassionate and disinterested in any thing associated with this illusionary world. You are unwavering, steadfast, stable, unmoving, constant and uniform. You are eternal, infinite, and without a beginning or an end. You are most pure and holy, are wise and acclaimed, are self-realised and an attained one. You are an embodiment, a personification, an image of truth. You are imperishable and unchanging (56).

Oh Vibho (omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, powerful one)! What do I know of, or how can I understand the essential form and nature of yours that is divine, transcendental, supreme, pure, ethereal, eclectic, sublime and esoteric, because I am an ignorant and a dud woman? Hence, Oh Sri Ram, I can only bow my head in reverence and adoration, to pay my humble obeisance and to worship you, hundreds of times with the highest and the most sincere of devotion, humility, dedication and submission for you that I can command (57).

देव मे यत्र कुत्रापि स्थिताया अपि सर्वदा।

त्वत्पादकमले सत्ता भक्तिरेव सदास्तु मे॥५८॥

नमस्ते पुरुषाध्यक्ष नमस्ते भक्तवत्सल।

नमस्तेऽस्तु हृषीकेश नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते॥५९॥

deva me yatra kutrāpi sthitāyā api sarvadā /
 tvatpādakamale saktā bhaktireva sadāstu me // 58
 namaste puruṣādhyakṣa namaste bhaktavatsala /
 namaste'stu hr̥ṣākeśa nārāyaṇa namo'stute // 59

58-59. Oh Lord! Wherever I stay, let me have eternal and sincere dedication, firm faith, steady admiration and unflinching devotion in your lotus-like feet (58).

Oh the master or Lord of men! I bow before you. Oh the lover and benefactor of devotees! I bow my head before you with palms joined together in submission. Oh Hrishikesh (Vishnu)! I bow before you. Oh Narayan (Vishnu)! I bow my head repeatedly before you (59).

भवभयहरमेकं भानुकोटिप्रकाशं कश्चुतशरचापं कालमेघावभासम् ।
 कनकरुचिरवस्त्रं रत्नवत्कुण्डलाढ्यं कमल विशदनेत्रं सानुजंराममीडे ॥६०॥

bhavabhayaharamekaṃ bhānukoṭiprakāśaṃ
 karadhṛtaśaracāpaṃ kālameghāvabhāsaṃ/
 kanakaruciravastraṃ ratnavatkuṇḍalāḍhyaṃ
 kamalaviśadanetraṃ sānujaṃ rāmamāḍe // 60

60. I sing the praises, honours and glories of Sri Ram— along with his younger brother Laxman— who is the only one to remove the fears of this world, is splendid and brilliant like crores (millions) of suns, who bears a bow and an arrow in his lotus-like hands, has a dark radiant complexion that resembles the dark clouds that are rich with rain, is wearing a magnificent yellow garment (robe) which is coloured like gold, is adorned by ear-rings studded with jewels and gems, and who has beautiful, enchanting broad eyes which are like the petals of a lotus flower.' (60).

स्तुत्वैवं पुरुषं साक्षाद्राघवं पुरतः स्थितम् ।
 परिक्रम्य प्रणम्याशु सानुजाता ययौ पतिम् ॥६१॥
 अहल्यया कृतं स्तोत्रं यः पठेद्भक्तिसंयुतः ।
 स मुच्यतेऽखिलैः पापैः परं ब्रह्माधिगच्छति ॥६२॥

stutvaivaṃ puruṣaṃ sākṣādrāghavaṃ purataḥ sthitam /
 parikramya praṇamyāśu sānujñātā yayau patim // 61
 ahalyayā kṛtaṃ stotraṃ yaḥ paṭhedbhaktisaṃyutaḥ /
 sa mucyate'khilaiḥ pāpaiḥ paraṃ brahmādhigacchati // 62

61-62. In this manner, she (Ahilya) sang the divine and holy glories, honours and praises of the supreme Purush (a reference to Lord Vishnu or the Viraat Purush) in the form of Raghav (Lord Ram) himself standing in front of her, went around him (circumambulated him), praised and honoured him, and then took his permission to go to her husband's (Gautam's) place (61).

Those people who read this Stotra (sacred hymns sung in honour of the Lord God), composed and sung by Ahilya, shall be liberated (freed) from all their sins (and their effects) and attain the most exalted stature of oneness with the Lord (or attain emancipation and salvation of their souls) (62).

पुत्राद्यर्थे पठेद्भक्त्या रामं हृदि निधायं च।

संवत्सरेण लभते वन्ध्या अपि सुपुत्रकम् ॥६३॥

सर्वान्कामानवाप्नोति रामचन्द्रप्रसादतः ॥६४॥

putrādyarthe paṭhedbhaktyā rāmaṃ hṛdi nidhāya ca /
saṁvatsareṇa labhate vandhyā api suputrakam // 63
sarvāṅkāmaṇavāpnōti rāmacandraprasādataḥ // 64

63-64. Even a barren woman who recites this hymn with due devotion, faith and conviction, with Sri Ram enshrined in her heart and with a desire to have a son, shall be blessed by an excellent son within a year. Besides it, all her desires can be fulfilled by the grace, benediction and munificence of Sri Ram (63-64).

ब्रह्मघ्नो गुरुतल्पगोऽपि पुरुषः स्तेयी सुरापोऽपि वा

मातृभ्रातृविहिंसकोऽपि सततं भोगैकबद्धातुरः।

नित्यं स्तोत्रमिदं जपन् रघुपतिं भक्त्या हृदिस्थं स्मरन्

ध्यायन्मुक्तिमुपैति किं पुनरसौ स्वाचारयुक्तो नरः ॥६५॥

brahmaghno gurutalpago'pi puruṣaḥ steyā surāpo'pi vā
mātr̥bhrātr̥vihīṁsako'pi satataṃ bhogaikabaddhāturaḥ /
nityaṃ stotramidaṃ japan raghupatiṃ bhaktyā hṛdayasthaṃ smaran
dhyāyanmuktimumupaiti kiṃ punarasau svācārayukto naraḥ // 65

65. Even they who are the slayers of Brahmins, have sexual relationship with the wife of their Guru (moral preceptor, teacher), are thieves, are drunkards, are cruel towards their parents and brothers, and are constantly engrossed in gratification of the sense organs and are indulgent in worldly pleasures, can have liberation from the shackles of this mundane world (i.e. achieve emancipation and salvation) by daily (constantly, persistently) remembering, concentrating, meditating and contemplating upon Lord Ram who resides in their hearts, as well as by reciting this devotional hymn sung by Ahilya. If this (salvation and emancipation) can be achieved by such (wicked, evil, pervert) persons, what to say of those who are righteous, noble and upright (i.e. there is no doubt or confusion about their emancipation and salvation) (65).

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Baal Kand — Canto 6

The bow-breaking ceremony and Sri Ram's marriage.

सूत उवाच

विश्वामित्रोऽथ तं प्राह राघवं सहलक्ष्मणम् ।

गच्छामो वत्स मिथिलां जनकेनाभिपालिताम् ॥१॥

दृष्ट्वा क्रतुवरं पश्चादयोध्यां गन्तुमर्हसि ।

इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ गङ्गामुत्तर्तुं सहाराघवः ।

तस्मिन्काले नाविकेन निषिद्धो रघुनन्दनः ॥२॥

sūta uvāca

viśvāmitro'tha taṃ prāha rāghavaṃ sahalakṣmaṇam /
gacchāmo vatsa mithilāṃ janakenābhipālītām // 1
dr̥ṣṭvā kratuvaram paścādayodhyāṃ gantumarhasi /
ityuktvā prayayau gaṅgāmuttartuṃ saharāghavaḥ /
tasminkāle nāvikenā niṣiddho raghunandanaḥ // 2

1-2. Sage Sut said—"Thereafter, sage Vishwamitra said to Raghav (Sri Ram) and Laxman, 'Sons, now we shall go visit the city of Mithila which is taken care of and sustained (i.e. ruled) by a king named Janak (1).

After seeing the Yagya ceremony (a special religious sacrifice) performed by him, you can go back to Ayodhya'. Saying thus, he came to the banks of river Ganges to cross it, along with Sri Ram (and Laxman). There, the boatman stopped Raghunandan (Sri Ram) from setting foot on his boat (2).

नाविक उवाच

क्षालयामि तव पादपङ्कजं नाथ दारुदृषदोः किमन्तरम् ।

मानुषीकरणचूर्णमस्ति ते पादयोरिति कथा प्रथीयसी ॥३॥

nāvika uvāca

kṣālayāmi tava pādapaṅkajaṃ nātha dārudr̥ṣadoḥ kimantaram /
mānuṣākaraṇacūrṇamasti te pādayoriti kathā prathāyasā // 3

3. The boatman said, 'Oh Lord! It is well known that your feet has some magical dust that can make (an inanimate object into) a human being. (Just recently, you had transformed a rock into a woman) What is the difference between a stone and wood (of which this boat is made of)? Hence, before you step in my boat, I will wash your feet (to ensure that my wooden boat is not turned into a lady) (3).

पादाम्बुजं ते विमलं हि कृत्वा पश्चात्परं तीरमहं नयामि।

नोचेत्तरी सद्युवती मलेन स्याच्चेद्विभो विद्धि कुटुम्बहानिः॥४॥

pādāmbujaṃ te vimalaṃ hi kṛtvā paścātparaṃ tārāmaḥaṃ nayāmi /
nocettarā sadyuvatā malena syāccedvibho viddhi kuṭambahāniḥ // 4

4. In this way, after getting your feet cleansed (by washing off the dust from it), I shall take you across the river (Ganges). Otherwise, oh Lord, if the boat turns into a beautiful woman by the Midas touch of the dust of your feet, then the very livelihood of my family shall be snatched away from me' (4).

इत्युक्त्वा क्षालितौ पादौ परं तीरं ततो गताः।

कौशिको रघुनाथेन सहितो मिथिलां ययौ॥५॥

विदेहस्य पुरं प्रातर्ऋषिवाटं समाविशत्।

प्राप्तं कौशिकमाकर्ण्य जनकोऽतिमुदान्वितः॥६॥

पूजाद्रव्याणि सङ्गृह्य सोपाध्यायः समाययौ।

दण्डवत्प्रणिपत्याथ पूजयामास कौशिकम्॥७॥

ityuktvā kṣālitau pādaḥ paraṃ tārāṃ tato gatāḥ /
kauśiko raghunāthena sahito mithilāṃ yayau // 5
videhasya puraṃ prātarṛṣivāṭaṃ samāviśat /
prāptaṃ kauśikamākarnya janako'timudānvitaḥ // 6
pūjādravyāṇi saṅgrhya sopādhyāyaḥ samāyayau /
daṇḍavatpranīpatyātha pūjayāmāsa kauśikam // 7

5-7. Saying this, Kewat (the boatman) washed his feet and then took him across the river. From there, sage Vishwamitra, accompanied by Sri Ram and Laxman, proceeded to Mithilapuri (Janakpur). At the crack of dawn, they arrived at Videha Nagar (Janakpur) and halted at the place earmarked for ascetics, sages and hermits. At that time, hearing the news of the arrival of sage Vishwamitra, king Janak felt extremely delighted (6), ----

----and taking necessary items for worship and welcome, he came there along with his royal priest (Shatanand), prostrated before the most exalted sage Vishwamitra and honoured him (7).

पप्रच्छ राघवौ दृष्ट्वा सर्वलक्षणसंयुतौ।

द्योतयन्तौ दिशः सर्वाश्चन्द्रसूर्याविवापरौ॥८॥

कस्यैतौ नरशार्दूलौ पुत्रौ देवसुतोपमौ।

मनः प्रीतिकरौ मेऽद्य नरनारायणाविव॥९॥

papraccha rāghavau drṣṭvā sarvalakṣaṇasaṃyutau /
dyotayantau diśaḥ sarvāścandrasūryāvivāparau // 8

kasyaitau naraśārdūlau putrau devasutopamau /
manahprātikarau me'dya naranārāyaṇāviva // 9

8-9. Then seeing those two princes of Raghu's clan (Sri Ram and Laxman), who lighted-up (illuminated) all the directions with their radiant glow, with Sri Ram resembling a sun with its brilliance and splendour, and Laxman a full moon that was most magnificent and enchanting the king asked (8),----

---- 'Who are these to lions or tigers in a human form.[This is a metaphor to indicate the praise that king had shown to the princes; in other words the king meant to say 'who are these most brave, courageous and strong boys'.] They are like the sons of Gods? They kindle (ignite, arouse) great affection in my heart as if they were 'Nar¹' and 'Narayan'¹ themselves' (9).

[Note—¹The word Nar means a male, while Narayan refers to Lord Vishnu. Here, king Janak means that both these brothers resemble the Lord and his counterpart, the man. Both are an image of each other; both are inseparable from each other. Lord Vishnu is colored like the sky, and so is Lord Ram, while a man is fair complexioned like Laxman.]

प्रत्युवाच मुनिः प्रीतो हर्षयन् जनकं तदा।

पुत्रौ दशरथस्यैतौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ॥१०॥

मखसंरक्षणार्थाय मयानीतौ पितुः पुरात्।

आगच्छन् राघवो मार्गे ताटकां विश्वघातिनीम्॥११॥

pratyuvāca muniḥ prāto harṣayan janakam tadā /
putrau daśarathasyaitau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau // 10
makhasaṁrakṣaṇārthāya mayānātau pituḥ purāt /
āgacchan rāghavo mārga tāṭakāṁ viśvaghātinīm // 11

10-11. Then sage Vishwamitra made Janak feel delighted and exhilarated by saying, 'These two brothers, Sri Ram and Laxman, are the sons of Dasrath, the king of Kaushal (Ayodhya) (10).

I have brought them from Ayodhya to protect my fire sacrifice (from being defiled by demons). While on the way, the most valorous and valiant Raghav (Sri Ram) has slayed Tadka, who was terrorising this world, by a single arrow at my instructions (11).

शरेणैकेन हतवान्नोदितो मेऽतिविक्रमः।

ततो ममाश्रमं गत्वा मम यज्ञविहिंसकान्॥१२॥

सुबाहुप्रमुखान् हत्वा मारीचं सागरेऽक्षिपत्।

ततो गङ्गातटे पुण्ये गौतमस्याश्रमं शुभम्॥१३॥

गत्वा तत्र शिलारूपा गौतमस्य वधूः स्थिता।

पादपङ्कजसंस्पर्शात्कृता मानुषरूपिणी॥१४॥

śareṇaikena hatavānnodito me'tivikramah /

tato mamāśramaṃ gatvā mama yajñavihimsakān // 12
 subāhupramukhānhatvā mārācaṃ sāgare'kṣipat /
 tato gaṅgātāte puṇye gautamasyāśramaṃ śubham // 13
 gatvā tatra śīlārūpā gautamasya vadhūḥ sthitā /
 pādapaṅkajasparśātkr̥tā mānuṣarūpiṇā // 14

12-14. Thereafter, having reached my hermitage, he had killed Subahu and other demons who had been desecrating my fire sacrifice, and threw (flung) Marich far off into the ocean (hundreds of miles away). After that, he came to the holy and pure hermitage of the great sage Gautam on the banks of river Ganges (12-13).

There he saw Gautam's wife in the form of a stone (rock) and turned her back into a divine form by merely touching her with his lotus-like feet (14).

दृष्ट्वाहल्यां नमस्कृत्य तया सम्यक्प्रपूजितः।
 इदानीं द्रष्टुकामस्ते गृहे माहेश्वरं धनुः॥१५॥
 पूजितं राजभिः सर्वैर्दृष्टमित्यनुशुश्रुवे।
 अतो दर्शय राजेन्द्र शैवं चापमनुत्तमम्।
 दृष्ट्वायोध्यां जिगमिषुः पितरं द्रष्टुमिच्छति॥१६॥

dr̥ṣṭvāhalyāṃ namaskṛtya tayā samyakprapūjitaḥ /
 idānāṃ draṣṭakāmaste gr̥he māheśvaraṃ dhanuḥ // 15
 pūjitaṃ rājabhiḥ sarvairdr̥ṣṭamityanuşūśruve /
 ato darśaya rājendra śaivaṃ cāpamanuttamam /
 dr̥ṣṭvāyodhyāṃ jigamiṣuḥ pitaraṃ draṣṭumicchati // 16

15-16. Seeing Ahilya, he (Sri Ram) paid his respect to her (by bowing before her), and then accepted her offerings of worships and prayers. Presently, he has come here to have a look at Shiva's bow (15).

I have heard that the bow is highly revered and worshipped at your place, and all the kings have already seen it. Therefore, oh king, show that bow of Lord Shiva to them (Sri Ram and Laxman) because they wish to return to their parents at Ayodhya soon after having seen it' (16).

इत्युक्तो मुनिना राजा पूजार्हाविति पूजया।
 पूजयामास धर्मज्ञो विधिदृष्टेन कर्मणा॥१७॥

जनक उवाच

ततः सम्प्रेषयामास मन्त्रिणं बुद्धिमत्तरम्।
 शीघ्रमानय विश्वेशचापं रामाय दर्शय॥१८॥

ityukto muninā rājā pūjārḥāviti pūjayā /
pūjayāmāsa dharmajñō vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā // 17
tataḥ sampreṣayāmāsa mantriṇaṃ buddhimattaram /

janaka uvāca

śāghramānaya viśveśacāpaṃ rāmāya darśaya // 18

17-18. When sage Vishwamitra had said so, the most righteous king Janak duly honoured and worshipped Sri Ram and Laxman, considering (or regarding) them to be worthy of it (i.e. respect, adoration, worship, honour, reverence and obeisance, because what the sage had just narrated is not an ordinary thing to do, and only the divine Lord can achieve this magnificent astounding and stupendous feat) (17).

Then he sent for his wise minister Janak said, 'You should bring the bow of Vishweshwar (literally, the Lord of the universe, i.e. Lord Shiva) soon and show it to Sri Ram' (18).

ततो गते मन्त्रिवरे राजा कौशिकमब्रवीत्।

यदि रामो धनुर्धृत्वा कोट्यामारोपयेद्गुणम्॥१९॥

तदा मयात्मजा सीता दीयते राघवाय हि।

तथेति कौशिकोऽप्याह रामं संवीक्ष्य सस्मितम्॥२०॥

tato gate mantrivare rājā kauśikamabravāt /
yadi rāmo dhanurdhṛtvā koṭyāmāropayedguṇam // 19
tadā mayātmajā sītā dāyate rāghavāya hi /
tatheti kauśiko'pyāha rāmaṃ saṃvīkṣya sasmitam // 20

19-20. When the minister had gone, the king said to Vishwamitra, 'If Sri Ram can lift the bow and string it (19), ----

----I will surely marry my daughter Sita to him'. Then sage Vishwamitra glanced at Sri Ram and smilingly replied, 'alright, so it be' (20).

शीघ्रं दर्शय चापाग्रं रामायामिततेजसे।

एवं ब्रुवति मौनीश आगताश्चापवाहकाः॥२१॥

चापं गृहीत्वा बलिनः पञ्चसाहस्रसङ्ख्यकाः।

घण्टाशतसमायुक्तं मणिबज्रादिभूषितम्॥२२॥

śāghraṃ darśaya cāpāgryaṃ rāmāyāmitatejase /
evaṃ bruvati maunāśa āgatāścāpavāhakāḥ // 21
cāpaṃ grḥātvā balinaḥ pañcasāhasrasaṅkhyakāḥ /
ghaṇṭāśatasamayuktaṃ maṇivajrādibhūṣitaṃ // 22

21-22. 'Oh king! Show that excellent bow to Sri Ram, who has immense radiance, brilliance and glory, very soon'. As soon as the sage had said so, five thousand most strong carriers brought that excellent, huge bow there. Hundreds of bells were tied to it, and it was decorated with diamonds, gems and other precious stones (21-22).

दर्शयामास रामाय मन्त्री मन्त्रयतां वरः।

दृष्ट्वा रामः प्रहृष्टात्मा बद्ध्वा परिकरं दृढम् ॥२३॥

गृहीत्वा वामहस्तेन लीलया तोलयन् धनुः।

आरोपयामास गुणं पश्यत्स्वखिलराजसु ॥२४॥

darśayāmāsa rāmāya mantrā mantrayatām varah /
dr̥ṣṭvā rāmaḥ prahr̥ṣṭātmā baddhvā parikaram̐ dṛḍham // 23
gṛhātṡvā vāmahastena līlayā tolayan dhanuḥ /
āropayāmāsa guṇam̐ paśyatsvakhilarājasu // 24

23-24. Then the minister of Janak, who was the best amongst his advisers, showed Sri Ram that bow. As soon as he saw it, the cheerful Sri Ram got ready (literally, tied the waist cloth tightly around his waist as a gesture of readiness; or rolled up his sleeves) and firmly held the bow with his left hand as if it was merely a sport (or play), and then strung it, even as all the assembled kings watched (23-24).

ईषदाकर्षयामास पाणिना दक्षिणेन सः।

बभञ्जाखिलहृत्सारो दिशः शब्देन पूरयन् ॥२५॥

दिशश्च विदिशश्चैव स्वर्गं मर्त्यं रसातलम्।

पदद्भुतमभूत्तत्र देवानां दिवि पश्यताम् ॥२६॥

आच्छादयन्तः कुसुमैर्देवाः स्तुतिभिरीडिरे।

देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुर्नृतश्चाप्सरोगणाः ॥२७॥

āśadākaraśayāmāsa pāṇinā dakṣiṇena saḥ /
babhañjākhilahṛtsāro diśaḥ śabdena pūrayan // 25
diśāśca vidiśāścaiva svargam̐ martyam̐ rasātaḥ /
tadadbhutamabhūttatra devānām̐ divi paśyatām // 26
ācchādayantaḥ kusumairdevāḥ stutibhirāḍire /
devadundubhayo nedurnṛtaśchāpsarogaṇāḥ // 27

25-27. Then he, who resides in and is most dear to the heart of all (i.e. Sri Ram), pulled that bow slightly with his right hand and broke it with a thunderous sound which reverberated (resonated, echoed) in all the ten directions of the world (25).

This sound echoed in lands near and far, in the heavens, the earth and the subterranean worlds. For the Gods watching from their celestial abodes, this was like a very strange, mysterious and dramatic occurrence (26).

The Gods covered him (Sri Ram) with a blanket of flowers falling in a torrent, sounded their trumpets and kettle-drums, and sang the glories and honours of the Lord, while celestial female dancers broke into a spontaneous dance (27).

द्विधा भग्नं धनुर्दृष्ट्वा राजालिङ्ग्य रघूद्वहम् ।
 विस्मयं लेभिरे सीतामातरोऽनतः पुराजिरे ॥२८॥
 सीता स्वर्णमयीं मालां गृहीत्वा दक्षिणे करे ।
 स्मितवक्त्रा स्वर्णवर्णा सर्वाभरणभूषिता ॥२९॥
 मुक्ताहारैः कर्णपत्रैः क्वणच्चरणनूपुरा ।
 दुकूलपरिसंवीता वस्त्रान्तर्व्यञ्जितस्तनी ॥३०॥

dvidhā bhagṇaṃ dhanurdr̥ṣṭvā rājāliṅgya raghūdvaḥam /
 vismayaṃ lebhire sātāmātarō'ntaḥpurājire // 28
 sātā svarṇamayāṃ mālāṃ gr̥hātvā dakṣiṇe kare /
 smitavaktrā svarṇavarṇā sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā // 29
 muktāhāraiḥ karṇapatraiḥ kvaṇaccaraṇanūpurā /
 dukūlaparisamvītā vastrāntarvyañjitastanā // 30

28-30. Seeing that the bow has been broken in to two pieces, king Janak jubilantly embraced Sri Ram, while the mothers of Sita (i.e. the various queens of Janak's royal household), who were present in the palace courtyard, were extremely astonished at the event (28).

After that, Sita, who was fully decked up in colourful bridal gear and who had a complexion resembling gold, came there with a cheerful, enchanting but a low-profile shy smile on her face¹. She had a golden garland in her right hand (29).

She was adorned by a pearl necklace, ear-rings, tinkling and jingling anklets and other ornaments, while her full bosoms were apparent behind the excellent 'Sari' (a body-wrapping seamless cloth worn by women in India) she wore (30).

रामस्योपरि निक्षिप्य स्मयमाना मुदं ययौ ।
 ततो मुमुदिरे सर्वे राजदाराः स्वलङ्कृतम् ॥३१॥
 गवाक्षजालरन्ध्रेभ्यो दृष्ट्वा लोकविमोहनम् ।
 ततोऽब्रवीन्मुनिं राजा सर्वशास्त्रविशारदः ॥३२॥

rāmasyopari nikṣipya smayamānā mudaṃ yayau /
 tato mumudire sarve rājadārāḥ svalaṅkṛtam // 31
 gavākṣajālarandhrebhyo dr̥ṣṭvā lokavimohanam /
 tato'bravānmuniṃ rājā sarvaśāstraviśāradaḥ // 32

31-32. Smiling modestly, Sita put the garland on Sri Ram (i.e. around his neck) and felt glad and delighted at doing so. All the queens who watched that fully decorated and world-enchanting image of Sri Ram from the balconies and windows of the palace, felt

extremely exhilarated at that moment. Then the king (Janak), who was an expert in all the Shastras (scriptures), said to sage Vishwamitra (31-32)—

भो कौशिक मुनिश्रेष्ठ पत्रं प्रेषय सत्वरम्।

राजा दशरथः शीघ्रमागच्छतु सपुत्रकः॥३३॥

विवाहार्थं कुमारानां सदारः सहमन्त्रिभिः।

तथेति प्रेषयामास दूतांस्त्वरितविक्रमान्॥३४॥

bho kauśika muniśreṣṭha patraṃ preṣaya satvaram/
rājā daśarathaḥ śāghramāgacchatu saputrakaḥ // 33
vivāhārthaṃ kumārāṇāṃ sadāraḥ sahamantribhiḥ /
tatheti preṣayāmāsa dūtāṁstvaritavikramān // 34

33-34. 'Oh the most exalted sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra)! You should send a letter of invitation to king Dasrath immediately. He should come to attend the marriage ceremony of the princes accompanied by his other sons, queens and ministers'. Then Vishwamitra replied 'alright' and sent swift messengers with the errand (33-34).

ते गत्वा राजशार्दूलं रामश्रेयो न्यवेदयन्।

श्रुत्वा रामकृतं राजा हर्षेण महताप्लुतः॥३५॥

मिथिलागमनार्थाय त्वरयामास मन्त्रिणः।

गच्छन्तु मिथिलां सर्वे गजाश्वरथपत्तयः॥३६॥

te gatvā rājaśārdūlaṃ rāmaśreyo nyavedayan /
śrutvā rāmakṛtaṃ rājā harṣeṇa mahatāplutaḥ // 35
mithilāgamanārthāya tvarayāmāsa mantriṇaḥ /
gacchantu mithilāṃ sarve gajāśvarathapattayaḥ // 36

35-36. The messengers took the good tidings and went to the lion-among-kings, Dasrath, and told him about the well beings of Sri Ram. Hearing about the strange and marvelous deeds done by Sri Ram, the king was submerged in extreme joy and delightedness (35).

Then showing eagerness to proceed to Janakpur at the earliest, he instructed his ministers—'Accompanied by elephants, horses, chariots and footmen, everyone should proceed to Mithila (Janakpur) post-haste (36).

रथमानय मे शीघ्रं गच्छाम्यद्यैव मा चिरम्।

वसिष्ठस्त्वग्रतो यातु सदारः सहितोऽग्निभिः॥३७॥

राममातृः समादाय मुनिर्मे भगवान् गुरुः।

एवं प्रस्थाप्य सकलं राजर्षिर्विपुलं रथम्॥३८॥

महत्या सेनया सार्धमारुह्य त्वरितो ययौ।

आगतं राघवं श्रुत्वा राजा हर्षसमाकुलः॥३९॥

प्रत्युज्जगाम जनकः शतानन्दपुरोधसा ।

यथोक्तपूजया पूज्यं पूजयामास सत्कृतम् ॥४०॥

rathamānaya me śāghraṃ gacchāmyadyaiva mā ciraṃ /
vasiṣṭhastvagrato yātu sadāraḥ sahito'gnibhiḥ // 37
rāmamātaḥ samādāya munirme bhagavān guruḥ /
evaṃ prasthāpya sakalaṃ rājarṣirvipulaṃ ratham // 38
mahatyā senayā sārdhamāruhya tvarito yayau /
āgataṃ rāghavaṃ śrutvā rājā harṣasamākulaḥ // 39
pratyujjagāma janakaḥ śatānandapurodhasā /
yathoktapūjayā pūjyaṃ pūjayāmāsa satkṛtam // 40

37-40. Bring my chariot immediately too, don't delay; I shall embark on the journey today itself. Let my Guru Vasistha, who is the best among sages, accompanied by his wife Arundhati and the ritualistic (holy, religious) fires, proceed in the vanguard along with all the mothers of Sri Ram'. Having thus made every one proceed ahead of him, the exalted king (Dasrath) mounted a huge chariot and surrounded by the army, royal entourage and accompanied with pomp and pageantry, proceeded hurriedly towards Janakpur with great swiftness and agility. Hearing that Dasrath—who was like a Tilak (i.e. most prominent, exalted, famed, praise worthy) in Raghu's clan—has arrived, king Janak, accompanied by his priest Shatanand, joyfully went forward to receive him. He duly welcomed the praise worthy and honourable king (Dasrath) as per established traditions and worshipped him (37-40).

रामस्तु लक्ष्मणेनाशु ववन्दे चरणौ पितुः ।

ततो हृष्टो दशरथो रामं वचनमब्रवीत् ॥४१॥

दिष्ट्या पश्यामि ते राम मुखं फुल्लाम्बुजोपमम् ।

मुनेरनुग्रहात्सर्वं सम्पन्नं मम शोभनम् ॥४२॥

rāmastu lakṣmaṇenāśu vavande caraṇau pituḥ /
tato hr̥ṣṭo daśaratho rāmaṃ vacanamabravāt // 41
diṣṭyā paśyāmi te rāma mukhaṃ phullāmbujopamam /
muneranugrahātsarvaṃ sampannaṃ mama śobhanam // 42

41-42. Thereafter, Sri Ram, along with Laxman, bowed at the feet of his father. Feeling extremely privileged and exhilarated, Dasrath said to him (41), ----

----'Oh Ram! It is very fortunate today that I am seeing your face which resembles a fully blooming lotus flower. By the grace and kindness of the honourable sage (Vishwamitra), I have been blessed with welfares and fortunes in every respect' (42).

इत्युक्त्वान्नाय मूर्धानमालिङ्ग्य च पुनः पुनः ।

हर्षेण महताविष्टो ब्रह्मानन्दं गतो यथा ॥४३॥

ततो जनकराजेन मन्दिरे सन्निवेशतः ।

शोभने सर्वभोगाढ्ये सदारः ससुतः सुखी ॥४४॥

ityuktvāghrāya mūrdhānamāliṅgya ca punaḥ punaḥ /
harṣeṇa mahatāviṣṭo brahmānandaṃ gato yathā // 43
tato janakarājena mandire sanniveśitaḥ /
śobhane sarvabhogāḍhye sadāraḥ sasutaḥ sukhā // 44

43-44. Saying this, he (Dasrath) repeatedly embraced him (clasped him to his bosom or heart), smelt his head (as a gesture of affection and love) and was subsequently drowned (submerged) in extreme bliss due to the exhilaration and happiness provided by the occasion (43).

After that, Janak gave him, along with all other queens and princes, a befitting residence in a very beautiful and comfortable palace provided with all the materials and paraphernalia of worldly comforts (44).

ततः शुभे दिन लग्ने सुमुहूर्ते रघूत्तमम् ।

आनयामास धर्मज्ञो रामं सभ्रातृकं तदा ॥४५॥

रत्नस्तम्भसुविस्तारे सुविताने सुतोरणे ।

मण्डपे सर्वशोभाढ्ये मुक्तापुष्पफलान्विते ॥४६॥

वेदविद्भिः सुसम्बाधे ब्राह्मणैः स्वर्णभूषितैः ।

सुवासिनीभिः परितो निष्ककण्ठीभिरावृते ॥४७॥

भेरीदुन्दुभिनिर्घोषैर्गीतनृत्यैः समाकुले ।

दिव्यरत्नाञ्जिते स्वर्णपीठे रामं न्यवेशयत् ॥४८॥

tataḥ śubhe dine lagne sumuhūrte raghūttamam /
ānayāmāsa dharmajño rāmaṃ sabhrātrkaṃ tadā // 45
ratnastambhasuvistāre suvitāne sutorāṇe /
maṇḍape sarvaśobhāḍhye muktāpuṣṭaphalānvite // 46
vedavidbhiḥ susambādhe brāhmaṇaiḥ svarṇabhūṣitaiḥ /
suvāsanābhiḥ parito niṣkakaṇṭhābhirāvṛte // 47
bherādundubhinirghoṣairgātānṛtyaiḥ samākule /
divyaratnāñcite svarṇapāṭhe rāmaṃ nyaveśayat // 48

45-48. Then, when the day, time and Lagna (a special configuration of stars) were all auspicious and most favourable for the occasion, the most righteous king Janak called Sri Ram along with his other brothers (45).

Then, in a large pavilion—which was endowed (provided) with all the possible magnificence and majesty, pomp and pageantry, grandeur and awe inspiring charm, which had fascinating gem-studded pillars, beautiful canopy, attractive and charming buntings, festoons, arches and gates, which was decorated with fruits and flowers made of pearls, and which was jam-packed with gold-bedecked Brahmins and was full of chaste women attired in beautiful attires—Sri Ram was made to sit on a grand and divinely radiant, gem-studded throne by king Janak. At that moment, there was a

tumultuous clamour and din created by various musical instruments such as trumpets and kettle drums, as well as by various dances and felicitous songs and praises being sung to celebrate the occasion (46-48).

वसिष्ठं कौशिकं चैव शतानन्दः पुरोहितः।

यथाक्रमं पूजयित्वा रामस्योभयपार्श्वयोः॥४९॥

स्थापयित्वा स तत्राग्निं ज्वालयित्वा यथाविधि।

सीतामानीय शोभाढ्यां नानारत्नविभूषिताम्॥५०॥

सभार्यो जनकः प्रायाद्रामं राजीवलोचनम्।

पादौ प्रक्षाल्य विधिवत्तदपो मूर्ध्न्यधारयत्॥५१॥

vasiṣṭhaṃ kauśikaṃ caiva śatānandaḥ purohitaḥ /
yathākramaṃ pūjayitvā rāmasyobhayapārśvayoḥ // 49
sthāpayitvā sa tatrāgniṃ jvālayitvā yathāvidhi /
sātāmānāya śobhāḍhyāṃ nānāratnavibhūṣitām // 50
sabhāryo janakaḥ prāyādrāmaṃ rājāvalocanam /
pādaū prakṣālya vidhivat tadapo mūrdhnyadhārayat // 51

49-51. The high priest Shatanand worshipped sage Vasistha and Vishwamitra one by one and seated them on either side of Sri Ram (49).

The holy fire was ceremoniously kindled according to established traditions, and bringing along Sita—who was decorated with different varieties of jewels—as well as the queens, king Janak approached the lotus-eyed Sri Ram, washed his feet devotionally as per sanctioned procedure, and then put the washed water on his own head (50-51).

या धृता मूर्ध्नि शर्वेण ब्रह्मणा मुनिभिः सदा।

ततः सीतां करे धृत्वा साक्षतोदकपूर्वकम्॥५२॥

रामाय प्रददौ प्रीत्या पाणिग्रहविधानतः।

सीता कमलपत्राक्षी स्वर्णमुक्तादिभूषिता॥५३॥

yā dhṛtā mūrdhni śarveṇa brahmaṇā munibhiḥ sadā /
tataḥ sātām kare dhṛtvā sāksatodakapūrvakam // 52
rāmāya pradadau prātyā pāṇigraha vidhānataḥ /
sātā kamalapatrākṣā svarṇamuktādibhūṣitā // 53

52-53. This water (used to wash Sri Ram's feet) is so holy that it is always kept on the head (as a gesture of deep reverence, honour and respect) even by Lord Shiva, Brahma and other sages and seers. Thereafter, he held the hands of Sita, performed the holy ritual of offering her formally in marriage to Sri Ram, and handed her over most affectionately, brimming over with joy and happiness, to him (52-53).

दीयते मे सुता तुभ्यं प्रीतो भव रघूत्तम।

इति प्रीतेन मनसा सीतां रामकरेऽर्पयन् ॥५४॥
 मुमोद जनको लक्ष्मीं क्षीराब्धिरिव विष्णवे ।
 उर्मिलां चौरसीं कन्यां लक्ष्मणाय ददौ मुदा ॥५५॥

dāyate me sutā tubhyaṃ prāto bhava raghūttama /
 iti prātena manasā sātām rāmakare'rpayan // 54
 mumoda janako lakṣmāṃ kṣārābdiriva viṣṇave /
 urmilāṃ caurasāṃ kanyāṃ lakṣmaṇāya dadau mudā // 55

54-55. Then he said, 'Oh the best one in the clan of Raghu! I am offering (or giving charge of, handing over) gold and pearl bedecked, lotus-eyed daughter of mine named Sita to you. Be happy and joyful (and accept her cheerfully and gladly)'. In this way, having offered Sita in the lotus-like hands of Sri Ram with an exhilarated mind and heart (54), ----

----Janak was as overwhelmed in bliss and ecstasy as the ocean of milk had been after having offered Laxmi in the lotus-like hands of Lord Vishnu (at the time of the legendary churning of the ocean). Thereafter, he married off his daughter Urmila, who was born out of his wedlock (i.e. from his wife), to Laxman (55).

[Note :- Sita was not born from his wife, Sunaina. As per legend, she was found in a pitcher while Janak was ploughing the fields to ceremoniously prepare the ground for a fire sacrifice which he was to do.]

दीयते मे सुता तुभ्यं प्रीतो भव रघूत्तम ।
 इति प्रीतेन मनसा सीतां रामकरेऽर्पयन् ॥५४॥
 मुमोद जनको लक्ष्मीं क्षीराब्धिरिव विष्णवे ।
 उर्मिलां चौरसीं कन्यां लक्ष्मणाय ददौ मुदा ॥५५॥

tathaiva śrutakārtiṃ ca māṇḍavāṃ bhrātrkanyake /
 bharatāya dadāvekāṃ śatrughnāyāparāṃ dadau // 54
 catvāro dārasampannā bhrātaraḥ śubhalakṣaṇāḥ /
 virejuḥ prabhayā sarve lokapālā ivāpare // 55

56-57. At the same time, he gave the daughters of his brother, who were named Mandavi and Srut Kirti, to Bharat and Shatrughan respectively (56).

As a result, all the four brothers—who were endowed with all the good characters and virtues—looked magnificent and glowed with their own radiance as in they were duplicate or parallel Lokpals (custodians of the four directions of the world) (57).

ततोऽब्रवीद्वसिष्ठाय विश्वामित्राय मैथिलः ।
 जनकः स्वसुतोदन्तं नारदेनाभिभाषितम् ॥५८॥
 यज्ञभूमिविशुद्ध्यर्थं कर्षतो लाङ्गलेन मे ।
 सीतामुखात्समुत्पन्ना कन्यका शुभलक्षणा ॥५९॥

तामद्राक्षमहं प्रीत्या पुत्रिकाभावभाविताम्।

अर्पिता प्रियभार्यायै शरच्चन्द्रनिभानना ॥६०॥

tato'bravādvasiṣṭhāya viśvāmitrāya maithilāḥ /
janakāḥ svasutodantaṁ nāradenābhībhāṣitam // 58
yajñābhūmiviśuddhyartham karṣato lāṅgalena me /
sātāmukhātsamutpannā kanyakā śubhalakṣaṇā // 59
tāmadrākṣamaham prātyā putrikābhāvabhāvitām /
arpitā priyabhāryāyai śaraccandranibhānanā // 60

58-60. After that, the Lord of Mithila, king Janak told sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra all that was disclosed to him previously about his daughter Sita by sage Narad (58).

He said, 'Once, I was ploughing the field to purify it (or sanctify it) by doing penances for the purpose of performing a fire sacrifice. At that time, this auspicious and virtuous girl was produced (or emerged) from the front part of my plough. [Hence she was named Sita, literally meaning 'the front tip of the plough'] (59).

When I saw her, a natural daughter-like affection arose in my heart for her, and so I brought and handed over that moon-faced infant girl to my wife (Sunaina) (60).

एकदा नारदोऽभ्यागाद्विविक्ते मयि संस्थिते।

रणयन्महतीं वीणां गायन्नारायणं विभुम् ॥६१॥

पूजितः सुखमासीनो मामुवाच सुखान्वितः।

शृणुष्व वचनं गुह्यं तवाभ्युदयकारणम् ॥६२॥

ekadā nārado'bhyāgādvivikte mayi saṁsthite /
raṇayanmahatām vāṇām gāyannārāyaṇam vibhum // 61
pūjitaḥ sukhamaśāno māmuvāca sukhānvitaḥ /
śṛṇuṣva vacanam guhyam tavābhyudayaakāraṇam // 62

61-62. Once, when I was sitting alone, sage Narad came to me playing his Indian lute called 'Mahati' and singing the glories of Lord Narayan who is all pervading and omnipresent (61).

After I had finished with the formality of welcoming and worshipping the sage, he sat down comfortably and said cheerfully, 'Oh King! Listen to this most secret clue to your welfare and auspiciousness (62).

परमात्मा हृषीकेशो भक्तानुग्रहकाम्यया।

देवकार्यार्थसिद्धयर्थं रावणस्य वधाय च ॥६३॥

जातो राम इति ख्यातो मायामानुषवेषधृक्।

आस्ते दाशरथिर्भूत्वा चतुर्धा परमेश्वरः ॥६४॥

paramātmā hr̥ṣākeśo bhaktānugrahakāmyayā /

devakāryārthasiddhyartham rāvaṇasya vadhāya ca // 63
 jāto rāma iti khyāto māyāmānuṣaṣadhṛk/
 āste dāśarathirbhūtvā caturdhā parameśvaraḥ // 64

63-64. Lord Vishnu (Hrishikesh) has incarnated (revealed) himself and has become famous in an illusionary human form known by the name of 'Ram' for the benefit of and to show munificence and benevolence on his devotees, to fulfill the wish of the Gods and to slay the demon Ravana. That supreme Lord has manifested himself in four forms as sons of Dasrath and presently resides in the city of Ayodhya (63-64).

योगमायापि सीतेति जाता वै तव वेश्मनि।
 अतस्त्वं राघवायैव देहि सीतां प्रयत्नतः॥६५॥
 नान्येभ्यः पूर्वभार्यैषा रामस्य परमात्मनः।
 इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ देवगतिं देवमुनिस्तदा॥६६॥

yogamāyāpi sāteti jātā vai tava veśmani /
 atastvaṃ rāghavāyaiva dehi sātām prayatnataḥ // 65
 nānyebhyaḥ pūrvabhāryaiṣā rāmasya paramātmanah /
 ityuktvā prayayau devagatiṃ devamunistadā // 66

65-66. Here, his delusion creating powers and infinite cosmic energy which is constructive and destructive at the same time depending upon what the Lord wants, called 'Yog Maya', has manifested in your household as Sita. Hence, you should attempt to betrothal Sita to Sri Ram and nobody else (i.e. you should endeavour to bring a union between the supreme Lord and his Maya)—because she has been his other half earlier also'. Saying this, the celestial sage Narad went away by the path of the sky (i.e. the celestial path leading to heaven) (65-66).

तदारभ्य मया सीता विष्णोर्लक्ष्मीर्विभव्यते।
 कथं मया राघवाय दीयते जानकी शुभा॥६७॥
 इति चिन्तासमाविष्टः कार्यमेकमचिन्तयम्।
 मत्पितामहगेहे तु न्यासभूतमिदं धनुः॥६८॥

tadārabhya mayā sātā viṣṇorlakṣmārvibhāvyate /
 katham mayā rāghavāya dāyate jānakā śubhā // 67
 iti cintāsamāviṣṭaḥ kāryamekamacintayam /
 matpitāmahagehe tu nyāsabhūtamidaṃ dhanuḥ // 68

67-68. Ever since then, I have regarded this Sita as the consort of Lord Vishnu. Reflecting on how to give this auspicious and virtuous Janki (Sita) to Raghav (Sri Ram), I thought of a way out (67).

In an earlier time, Lord Shiva had, after having reduced to ashes the demon Tripurasur, deposited this bow with my grandfather (for safe custody) (68).

ईश्वरेण पुरा क्षिप्तं पुरदाहादनन्तरम्।

धनुरेतत्पणं कार्यमिति चिन्त्य कृतं तथा ॥६९॥

सीतापाणिग्रहार्थाय सर्वेषां माननाशनम्।

त्वत्प्रसादान्मुनिश्रेष्ठ रामो राजीवलोचनः ॥७०॥

āśvareṇa purā kṣiptaṁ puradāhādanantaram /
dhanuretatpaṇaṁ kāryamiti cintya kṛtaṁ tathā // 69
sātāpāṇigrahārthāya sarveṣāṁ mānanāśanam /
tvatprasādānmuniśreṣṭha rāmo rājāvalocanaḥ // 70

69-70. Inspired that I should make this bow—which is a vanquisher of haughtiness, pride, vanity and ego of all—as a bet (or condition) for marrying Sita, I went ahead and decided to implement it. Oh the most exalted sage (Vishwamitra)! By your grace, the lotus-eyed Sri Ram has come here to see that bow of Lord Shiva (69-70).

आगतोऽत्र धनुर्द्रष्टुं फलितो मे मनोरथः।

अद्य मे सफलं जन्म राम त्वां सह सीतया ॥७१॥

एकासनस्थं पश्यामि भ्राजमानं रविं यथा।

त्वत्पादाम्बुधरो ब्रह्मा सृष्टिचक्रप्रवर्तकः ॥७२॥

āgato'tra dhanurdraṣṭuṁ phalito me manorathaḥ /
adya me saphalaṁ janma rāma tvāṁ saha sātayā // 71
ekāsanasthaṁ paśyāmi bhrājamānaṁ raviṁ yathā /
tvatpādāmbudharo brahmā sṛṣṭicakrapravartakaḥ // 72

71-72. This has resulted in my vows being honoured (i.e. all my efforts have borne fruits). [Turning to Lord Ram, he said--] 'Oh Sri Ram! Today my life has been fully rewarded (and I am feeling extremely privileged) that I behold you—who are as splendidous and radiant as the sun—and Sita seated together on the same throne. Brahma had embarked on (the project of) creating this universe (existence, creation) after having first put the holy water used to wash your divine feet on his head (as a mark of greatest of reverence, honour and obeisance as well as empowerment) (71-72).

बलिस्त्वत्पादसलिलं घृत्वाभूद्विजाधिपः।

त्वत्पादपांसुसंस्पर्शादहल्या भर्तृशापतः ॥७३॥

सद्य एव विनिर्मुक्ता कोऽन्यस्त्वत्तोऽधिरक्षिता ॥७४॥

balistvatpādasalilaṁ dhṛtvābhūdivijādhipaḥ /
tvatpādapāṁsusm̐sparśādahalyā bharṭṛśāpataḥ // 73
sadya eva vinirmuktā ko'nyastvatto'dhirakṣitā // 74

73-74. By the glory and potential effect of the water used to wash your holy feet, Vaali had obtained the honour and stature equivalent to that of Indra (the king of Gods), and it was the touch of the dust of your holy feet which instantly liberated Ahilya from the curse cast upon her by her husband (Gautam). Who else is a greater protector and benefactor than you are? (73-74).

यत्पादपङ्कजपरागसुरागयोगिवृन्दैर्जितं भवभयं जितकालचक्रैः।

यन्नामकीर्तनपरा जितदुःखशोका देवास्तमेव शरणं सततं प्रपद्ये॥७५॥

yatpādapaṅkajaparāgasurāgayogivṛndairjitaṁ
bhavabhayaṁ jita-kālacakraiḥ /
yannāmakārtanaparā jitaduḥkhaśokā devāstameva
śaraṇaṁ satataṁ prapadye // 75

75. I constantly, abidingly and permanently bow before and accept your refuge (shelter)—the admiration, intoxication and enchantment of the nectar of whose lotus-like feet has enabled Yogis (ascetics), who have already conquered the 'Kal Chakra' (the vicious, endless cycle of birth and death), to also vanquish the fear of this deluding, mundane world, while the Gods obtain victory over sorrows, distress, anguish and gloom of all kinds by being engrossed (or constantly involved) in reciting, chanting, singing and reflecting upon the glories of your holy name' (75).

इति स्तुत्वा नृपः प्रादाद्राघवाय महात्मने।

दीनाराणां कोटिशतं स्थानामयुतं तदा॥७६॥

अश्वानां नियुतं प्रादाद्राजानां षट्शतं तथा।

पत्नीनां लक्षमेकं तु दासीनां त्रिशतं ददौ॥७७॥

iti stutvā nṛpaḥ prādādrāghavāya mahātmane /
dānārāṇāṁ koṭīśataṁ rathānāmayutaṁ tadā // 76
aśvānāṁ niyutaṁ prādādgajānāṁ ṣaṭśataṁ tathā /
pattānāṁ lakṣamekaṁ tu dāsānāṁ trīśataṁ dadau // 77

76-77. Having thus lauded and sung Sri Ram's glories and praises, the king (Janak) gave him, as dowry, 100 crore [one crore = 10 million] gold sovereigns, 10 thousand chariots, 10 lakh [1lakh = one million] horses, 6 hundred elephants, one lakh footmen (infantry; foot soldiers; servants), and 3 hundred maid servants (76-77).

दिव्याम्बराणि हाराञ्च मुक्तारत्नमयोज्ज्वलान्।

सीतायै जनकः प्रादात्प्रीत्या दुहितृवत्सलः॥७८॥

वसिष्ठादीन्सुसंपूज्य भरतं लक्ष्मणं तथा।

पूजयित्वा यथान्यायं तथा दशरथं नृपम्॥७९॥

प्रस्थापयामास नृपो राजानं रघुसत्तमम्।

सीतामालिङ्गच रुदतीं मातरः साश्रुलोचनाः॥८०॥

divyāambarāṇi hārāmśca muktāratnamayojjvalān /
sātāyai janakaḥ prādātprātyā duhitṛvatsalaḥ // 78
vasiṣṭhādānsusāmpūjya bharataṁ lakṣmaṇaṁ tathā /
pūjayitvā yathānyāyaṁ tathā daśarathaṁ nr̥paṇ // 79
prasthāpayāmāsa nr̥po rājānaṁ raghusattamaṁ /
sātāmāliṅgya rudatām mātaraḥ sāśrulocanāḥ // 80

78-80. Besides the above, the affectionate father gave his daughter Sita, with great love and full of fatherly emotions, many marvelous, magnificent and majestic clothes and different types of wearing apparels, as well as bright, glittering and dazzling garlands and necklaces studded with pearls, gems and jewels (78).

Then he worshipped and honoured sage Vasistha. After that, he duly honoured Bharat, Laxman, Shatrughan and king Dasrath by offerings of wealth and various gifts, and then bade farewell to the most exalted king Dasrath of Raghu's clan. The mothers clasped the weeping Sita to their bosoms, and advised her (79-80)—

श्वश्रुशुश्रूषणपरा नित्यं राममनुव्रता ।

पातिव्रत्यमुपालम्ब्य तिष्ठ वत्से यथा सुखम्॥८१॥

śvaśrūśuśrūṣaṇaparā nityaṁ rāmamanuvratā /
pāativratyamupālambya tiṣṭha vatse yathā sukham // 81

81. 'Oh dear daughter! Be blessed! You must constantly and vigilantly serve your mothers-in-law, diligently follow Sri Ram, rely on the edicts, tenets and sanctified code of behaviour or conduct for a chaste and loyal wife (Pativrata Dharma), and live contentedly and happily' (81).

प्रयाणकाले रघुनन्दनस्य भेरीमृदङ्गानकतूर्यघोषः ।

स्वर्वासिभेरीघनतूर्यशब्दैः संमूर्च्छितो भूतभयङ्करोऽभूत्॥८२॥

prayāṇakāle raghunandanasya bherāmṛdaṅgānakatūryaghoṣaḥ /
svarvāsibherāghanaatūryaśabdaiḥ saṁmūrccchito bhūtabhayaṅkaro'bhūt // 82

82. At the time of Sri Ram's (i.e. the marriage party's) departure, there was a tumultuous, thunderous cacophony of musical instruments such as kettle-drums, tumbrels, drums and bugles being played on the earth as well as of trumpets, cymbals, bugles etc. in the sky by the Gods, so much so that this din created fear among all the creatures (82).

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Baal Kand — Canto 7

Sage Parashuram's episode.

सूत उवाच

अथ गच्छति श्रीरामे मैथिलाद्योजनत्रयम् ।
 निमित्तान्यतिघोराणि ददर्श नृपसत्तमः ॥१॥
 नत्वा वसिष्ठं पप्रच्छ किमिदं मुनिपुङ्गव ।
 निमित्तानीह दृश्यन्ते विषमाणि समन्ततः ॥२॥

sūta uvāca

atha gacchati śrārāme maithilādyojanatrāyam /
 nimittānyatighorāṇi dadarśa nṛpasattamaḥ // 1
 natvā vasiṣṭhaṁ papraccha kimidaṁ munipuṅgava /
 nimittānāha drśyante viṣmāṇi samantataḥ // 2

1-2. Sage Sut said—'After about three Yojans [one Yojan = 4, 8 or 16 miles according to different scales or schools of measurement; the most usual being a distance of 8 miles] from Mithila, the exalted king Dasrath saw severe inauspicious, horrible and frightening signs (1).

He then bowed his head to sage Vasistha and enquired of him, 'Oh the most exalted sage! What is the reason that these terrible and bad omens and signs are being observed in all the directions?' (2).

वसिष्ठस्तमथ प्राह भयमागामि सूच्यते ।
 पुनरप्यभयं तेऽद्य शीघ्रमेव भविष्यति ॥३॥
 मृगाःप्रदक्षिणं यान्ति पश्य त्वां शुभसूचकाः ।
 इत्येवं वदतस्तस्य ववौ घोरतरोऽनिलः ॥४॥
 मुष्णंश्चक्षूषि सर्वेषां पांसुवृष्टिभिरर्दयन् ।
 ततो ब्रजन्ददशाग्निं तेजोराशिमुपस्थितम् ॥५॥

vasiṣṭastamatha prāha bhayamāgāmi sūcyate /
 punarapyabhayaṁ te'dya śāghrameva bhaviṣyati // 3
 mṛgāḥ pradakṣiṇaṁ yānti paśya tvāṁ śubhasūcakāḥ /
 ityevaṁ vadatastasya vavau ghorataro'nilah // 4

muṣṇamścaksūmṣi sarveṣāṃ pāmsuvrṣṭibhirardayan /
tato vrajandadarśāgre tejorāsimupasthitam // 5

3-5. Sage Vashitha (deciphered the indications portended by the various omens and) said, 'These bad omens are indicative of some very fearful event in the near future, but (simultaneously they also indicate that) soon thereafter there will be fearlessness (3), ----

----because look, auspicious animals (deer) which are heralds of good tidings, auspiciousness and welfares are going towards (i.e. moving about) your right-hand side'. No sooner had Vasistha said this than a very fierce wind started blowing (as if a storm was fast approaching) (4).

So much dust was raised that everyone became blinded. Proceeding ahead, the party saw a radiantly illuminated icon standing in front of them (5).

कोटिसूर्यप्रतीकाशं विद्युत्पुञ्जसमप्रभम् ।
तेजोराशिं ददर्शार्थं जामदग्नयं प्रतापवान् ॥६॥
नीलमेघनिभं प्रांशुं जटामण्डलमण्डितम् ।
धनुःपरशुपाणिं च साक्षात्कालमिवान्तकम् ॥७॥
कार्तवीर्यान्तिकं रामं दृप्तक्षत्रियमर्दनम् ।
प्राप्तं दशरथस्याग्रे कालमृत्युमिवापरम् ॥८॥

kotisūryapratākāśaṃ vidyutpuñjasamaprabham /
tejorāsiṃ dadarśātha jāmadagnyaṃ pratāpavān // 6
nālameghanibhaṃ prāṁśuṃ jaṭāmaṇḍalamāṇḍitam /
dhanuḥ paraśupāṇiṃ ca sāksātkālamivāntakam // 7
kārtavāryāntakam rāmaṃ dr̥ptakṣatriyamardanam /
prāptaṃ daśarathasyāgre kālamṛtyumivāparam // 8

6-8. Then they saw sage Parashuram coming towards them. He was as splendid as crores (millions) of suns, dazzling and brilliant as a source (point) of electric, most victorious, famous and valorous, a treasury of radiance and splendour, had a hue resembling that of blue clouds, had a huge and colossus body, a crown of matted hairs, held a bow and an axe in his hands, and resembled Kaal (death), who is famed as a destroyer of all creatures, personified himself. (6-7).

They saw that Parsahuram—who was the slayer of 'Kartavirya' and was the vanquisher of the haughtiness and pride of the arrogant and haughty Kshatriya clan, and who was like a parallel (or duplicate) Yam (the God of death)—was standing angrily in front of Dasrath (8).

तं दृष्ट्वा भयसन्त्रस्तो राजा दशरथस्तदा ।
अर्घ्यादिपूजां विस्मृत्य त्राहि त्राहीति चाब्रवीत् ॥९॥
दण्डवत्प्रणिपत्याह पुत्रप्राणं प्रयच्छ मे ।
इति ब्रुवन्तं राजानमनादृत्य रघूत्तमम् ॥१०॥
उवाच निष्ठुरं वाक्यं क्रोधात्प्रचलितेन्द्रियः ।

त्वं राम इति नाम्ना मे चरसि क्षत्रियाधम॥११॥

taṃ dṛṣṭvā bhayasantrasto rājā daśarathastadā /
arghyādipūjāṃ vismṛtya trāhi trāhāti cābravāt // 9
daṇḍavatpraṇipatyāha putraprāṇaṃ prayaccha me /
iti bruvantaṃ rājānāmanādr̥tya raghūttamam // 10
uvāca niṣṭhuraṃ vākyaṃ krodhātpracalitendriyaḥ /
tvam rāma iti nāmnā me carasi kṣatriyādhama // 11

9-11. At that moment, king Dasrath became so scared that he even forgot to formally worship, honour and welcome him, and instead pleaded for mercy—'Save me, have mercy on me', he cried (9).

He prostrated before him and beseeched, 'Give me the alms (blessing) of my son's life (i.e. spare the life of my son)'. He (Parashuram) paid no attention to the pleadings of Dasrath, and seething with anger, he addressed the best in Raghu's clan (Sri Ram) in a stern and wrathful voice (10), ----

----'Oh the most lowly and wicked Kshatriya! You have become as famous as my name 'Ram' and move about unhindered and unchallenged on this earth (11).

द्वन्द्वयुद्धं प्रयच्छाशु यदि त्वं क्षत्रियोऽसिवै।

पुराणं जर्जरं चापंभङ्क्त्वा त्वं कथ्यसे मुधा॥१२॥

अस्मिंस्तु वैष्णवे चाप आरोपयसि चेद्गुणम्।

तदा युद्धं त्वया सार्धं करोमि रघुवंशज॥१३॥

नो चेत्सर्वान्हनिष्यामि क्षत्रियान्तकरो ह्यहम्।

इति ब्रुवति ववै तस्मिंश्चाल वसुधा भृशम्॥१४॥

dvandvayuddhaṃ prayacchāśu yadi tvam kṣatriyo'si vai /
purāṇaṃ jarjaraṃ cāpaṃ bhaṅktvā tvam kathyase mudhā // 12
asmiṃstu vaiṣṇave cāpa āropayasi cedguṇam /
tadā yuddhaṃ tvayā sārthaṃ karomi raghuvaṃśaja // 13
no cetsarvānhanīṣyāmi kṣatriyāntakaro hyaham /
iti bruvati vai tasmīnścāla vasudhā bhr̥śam // 14

12-14. So if you are a true Kshatriya, have a one-on-one duel with me—you are getting yourself falsely praised by breaking a worn out, rusted, decrepit, old and decayed bow (12).

Oh the one who has taken birth in the clan of Raghu! If you dare to string this 'Vaishnav bow' (the bow of Lord Vishnu), I shall fight a duel with you (13).

Otherwise, I shall immediately kill you all because it is my wont (vow, determination, habit, temperament, inclination) to slay the Kshatriya (the warrior class) on this earth'. The earth repeatedly shook at these horrifying and shocking words of Parashuram (14).

अन्धकारो बभूवाथ सर्वेषामपि चक्षुषाम्।

रामो दाशरथिर्वीरो वीक्ष्य तं भार्गवं रुषा।१५॥

धनुराच्छिद्य तद्धस्तादारोप्य गुणमञ्जसा।

तूणीराद्बाणमादाय संधायाकृष्य वीर्यवान्।१६॥

उवाच भार्गवं रामं शृणु ब्रह्मन्वचो मम।

लक्ष्यं दर्शय बाणस्य ह्यमोघो मम सायकः।१७॥

andhakāro babhūvātha sarveṣāmapī cakṣuṣām /
rāmo dāśarathirvāro vākṣya taṁ bhārgavaṁ ruṣā // 15
dhanurācchidya taddhastādātopya guṇamañjasā /
tūṇārādbāṇamādāya saṁdhāyākṛṣya vīryavān // 16
uvāca bhārgavaṁ rāmaṁ śṛṇu brahmanvaco mama /
lakṣyaṁ darśaya bāṇasya hyamogho mama sāyakaḥ // 17

15-17. Darkness (danger) loomed in front of everyone's eyes. The brave son of Dasrath, Sri Ram, looked fiercely and sternly at Parashuram, snatched the said Vaishnav bow from his hand, strung it casually without any effort, pulled an arrow from his quiver, mounted it on the bow, pulled the string and contemptuously asked Parashuram, 'Oh Brahmin! Listen to me. My arrow does not go in vain. Show (tell) me a target for it immediately (15-17).

लोकान्पादयुगं वापि वद शीघ्रं ममाज्ञया।

अयं लोकः परोवाथ त्वया गन्तुं न शक्यते।१८॥

एवं त्वं हि प्रकर्तव्यं वद शीघ्रं ममाज्ञया।

एवं वदति श्रीरामे भार्गवो विकृताननः।१९॥

lokānpādayugaṁ vāpi vada śāghraṁ mamājñayā /
ayaṁ lokaḥ paro vātha tvayā gantuṁ na śakyate // 18
evaṁ tvaṁ hi prakartavyaṁ vada śāghraṁ mamājñayā /
evaṁ vadati śrārāme bhārgavo vikṛtānanaḥ // 19

18-19. Should I aim at the Lokas (i.e. various worlds which you have conquered by virtue of your righteousness, penances, austerities and noble deeds) or at your feet—out of these, I command you to show me one immediately. (I shall pierce it with this arrow and mind you—) You cannot go and hide or take shelter now either in this world or the next world (i.e. the terrestrial world and the heavens or the world of after-life) (18).

Tell me immediately what shall I do with you (or how shall I treat you, or deal with you, for I have had enough of your arrogance and haughtiness)?' Hearing such fearless, courageous and aggressive words of Sri Ram, Brighu's son Parashuram's face suddenly became sullen, dull and gloomy (i.e. he was totally taken aback and shell-shocked at Sri Ram's bold, brave and fearless demeanours. Parashuram had never expected this, as he was accustomed to his Kshatriya opponents always kneeling down

before him and pleading for mercy, and was therefore ill prepared for this sudden turn of events) (19).

संस्मरन्पूर्ववृत्तान्तमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।

राम राम महाबाहो जाने त्वां परमेश्वरम् ॥२०॥

पुराणपुरुषं विष्णुं जगत्सर्गलयोद्भवम् ।

बाल्येऽहं तपसा विष्णुमाराधयितुमङ्गसा ॥२१॥

चक्रतीर्थं शुभं गत्वा तपसा विष्णुमन्वहम् ।

अतोषयं महात्मानं नारायणमनन्यधीः ॥२२॥

ततः प्रसन्नो देवेशः शङ्खचक्रगदाधरः ।

उवाच मां रघुश्रेष्ठ प्रसन्नमुखपङ्कज ॥२३॥

saṁsmaranpūrvavṛttāntamidaṁ vacanamabravāt /
rāma rāma mahābāho jāne tvām parameśvaram // 20
purāṇapuruṣaṁ viṣṇuṁ jagatsargalayodbhavam /
bālye'haṁ tapasā viṣṇumārādhayitumañjasā // 21
cakratārthaṁ śubhaṁ gatvā tapasā viṣṇumanvahaṁ /
atoṣayaṁ mahātmānaṁ nārāyaṇamananyadhāḥ // 22
tataḥ prasanno deveśaḥ śaṅkhacakraḡadādharaḥ /
uvāca māṁ raghuśreṣṭha prasannamukhapaṅkajaḥ // 23

20-23. Then, remembering the episode of an earlier time, he humbly submitted, 'Oh Sri Ram! Oh the most brave and courageous one! I have now recognised you as the supreme Lord (Parmeshwar) (20).

You are verily Lord Vishnu himself who is the very cause of creation, its sustenance and annihilation, and is the one who is famed in the Purans. During my childhood days, I wanted to please Lord Vishnu by way of Tapa (doing severe penances and austerities) (21)----

----and reached 'Chakra Tirtha' (literally, a religious site with a circular pond). There, I involved myself in daily and regular Tapa with great devotion, faith, conviction and intensity which pleased Vishnu (22).

Oh the best in the clan of Raghu (Sri Ram)! At that time, the bearer of conch, discus and mace, blissful and cheerful Lord of Gods, Vishnu, said to me most happily (23)—

श्रीभगवानुवाच

उत्तिष्ठ पतसो ब्रह्मन्फलितं ते तपो महत् ।

मच्चिदंशेन युक्तस्त्वं जहि हैहयपुङ्गवम् ॥२४॥

कार्तवीर्यं पितृहणं यदर्थं तपसः श्रमः ।

ततस्त्रिःसप्तकृत्वस्त्वं हत्वा क्षत्रियमण्डलम् ॥२५॥

śrābhagavānuvāca

uttiṣṭha tapaso brahmanphalitaṃ te tapo mahat /
maccidaṃśena yuktastvaṃ jahi haihayapuṅgavam // 24
kārtavāryaṃ pitṛhaṇaṃ yadārthaṃ tapasaḥ śramaḥ /
tatastriḥsaptakṛtvastvaṃ hatvā kṣtriyamaṇḍalam // 25

24-25. The Lord said, 'Oh Brahmin! Conclude (wind-up) your austerities; your efforts are successful. You shall be empowered with a fraction of me (i.e. by a tiny part of my stupendous and potential powers). Slay Kartvirya who is the best in the clan of Haihay (haihayapuṅgavam) but is the killer of his own father (pitṛhaṇaṃ), and for which purpose you have done such severe penances and austerities (Tapa). After doing that, kill all the Kshatriyas on this earth twenty one times repeatedly (24-25).

कृत्स्नां भूमिं कश्यपाय दत्त्वा शान्तिमुपावह।
त्रेतामुखे दाशरथिर्भूत्वा रामोऽहमव्ययः॥२६॥
उत्पत्स्ये परया शक्त्या तदा द्रक्ष्यसि मां ततः।
मत्तेजः पुनरादास्ये त्वयि दत्तं मया पुरा॥२७॥
तदा तपश्चरँल्लोके तिष्ठ त्वं ब्रह्मणो दिनम्।
इत्युक्त्वान्तर्दधे देवस्तथा सर्वं कृतं मया॥२८॥

krtsanāṃ bhūmiṃ kaśyapāya dattvā śāntimupāvaha /
tretāmukhe dāśarathirbhūtvā rāmo'hamavyayaḥ // 26
utpatsye parayā śaktyā tadā drakṣyasi mām tataḥ /
mattejāḥ punarādāsye tvayi dattaṃ mayā purā // 27
tadā tapaścaramlloke tiṣṭha tvaṃ brahmaṇo dinam /
ityuktvāntardadhe devastathā sarvaṃ kṛtaṃ mayā // 28

26-28. After that, hand the earth over to sage Kashyap. Be blessed with peace and tranquility. I—who am an indestructible and eternal supreme Soul—shall take birth (i.e. reveal or manifest myself as an incarnation) as 'Ram' in the household of Dasrath in 'Treta Yug' (the 2nd era of the four era celestial cycle of creation and destruction) (26).

At that time, you shall see me with my supreme power (i.e. my infinite cosmic energy in the form of Sita). At that moment, I shall take back from you those immense powers that I am bestowing upon, or delegating to you now (27).

After that, till the end of the Kalpa [equivalent to roughly 432 × 106 years], you would do austerities and penances and stay peacefully on this earth' (28).

स एव विष्णुस्त्वं राम जातोऽसि ब्रह्मणार्थितः।
मयि स्थितं तु त्वत्तेजस्त्वयैव पुनराहृतम्॥२९॥
अद्य मे सफलं जन्म प्रतीतोऽसि मम प्रभो।
ब्रह्मादिभिरलभ्यस्त्वं प्रकृतेः पारगो मतः॥३०॥

त्वयि जन्मादिषड्भावा न सन्त्यज्ञानसंभवाः।

निर्विकारोऽसि पूर्णस्त्वं गमनादिविवर्जितः॥३१॥

sa eva viṣṇustvaṃ rāma jāto'si brahmaṇārthitaḥ /
mayi sthitaṃ tu tvattejastvayaiva punarāhṛtaḥ // 29
adya me saphalaṃ janma pratāto'si mama prabho /
brahmādibhiralabhyastvaṃ prakṛteḥ pārago mataḥ // 30
tyayi janmādiṣaḍbhāvā na santyajñānasambhavāḥ /
nirvikāro'si pūrṇastvaṃ gamanādivivarjitaḥ // 31

29-31. Oh Sri Ram! You are the same Vishnu. You have taken birth on the prayers of Brahma. Your immense powers which were vested in me till now have been taken back by you today (29).

Today, I consider my life as worthy and successful (i.e. I feel extremely fortunate and privileged) that I have recognised you (as Lord Vishnu in your current form as Ram), more so because you are regarded as being inaccessible to even the creator Brahma and other exalted ones, as well as are beyond 'Nature' (30).

You do not have ignorance-induced six faulty delusions, such as birth etc., which form an integral part of this creation. At the same time, you are free from wandering in the cycle of birth and death (or literally, the journey in various wombs as a mortal creature who has to repeatedly take birth due to its ignorance and the effects of the deeds done by it). You are faultless, changeless and complete in all respects (31).

[Note—According to Mudgalo-panishad, 4/7 of the Rig Veda tradition, the six faulty delusions, called 'Urmi', that create fear, sorrows, agonies and pains to a creature mentioned above are the following:--(1) hunger, (2) thirst, (3) grief, (4) Moha (worldly attachments, illusions, entrapments), (5) horrors of old age, and (6) death.]

यथा जले फेनजालं घूमौ वह्नौ यथा त्वयि।

त्वदाधारा त्वद्विषया माया कार्यं सृजत्यहो॥३२॥

यावन्मायावृता लोकास्तावत्त्वां न विजानते।

अविचारितसिद्धैषाविद्या विद्याविरोधिनी॥३३॥

yathā jale phenajālaṃ dhūmo vahnau tathā tyayi /
tvadādhārā tvadviṣayā māyā kāryaṃ sṛjatyaho // 32
yāvanmāyāvṛtā lokāstāvattvāṃ na vijānate /
avicāritasiddhaiṣāvidyā vidyāvirodhiṇī // 33

32-33. Ah! Maya (delusions in this creation), which is dependent on you and which has you as its subject (in the sense that it prevents creatures from knowing the truth about you and your true form by keeping them deluded, but allows those upon whom you are pleased to learn the truth about you), creates various types of strange and mysterious worldly deeds and entanglements which are like foam in water and smoke from the fire (32).

As long as a person is covered by (i.e. sheathed, engulfed, enveloped, surrounded, entangled by, under the spell of) Maya, he cannot realise (understand, recognise) you and your true form. This ignorance and lack of truthful knowledge or dearth of self realisation, which is inimical (opposed) to knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and realisation, exists only till the time no thought is given to it (that Maya is casting a net to trap the creature and keep it bound in shackles of ignorance like a slave unaware of his legal rights) (33).

अविद्याकृतदेहादिसङ्घाते प्रतिबिम्बिता ।

चिच्छक्तिर्जीवलोकेऽस्मिन् जीव इत्यभिधीयते ॥३४॥

यावद्देहमनःप्राणबुद्ध्यादिष्वभिमानवान् ।

तावत्कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वसुखदुःखादिभाग्भवेत् ॥३५॥

avidyākṛtadehādisaṅghāte pratibimbitā /
cicchaktirjāvaloke'smin jāva ityabhidhāyate // 34
yāvaddehamanaḥprāṇabuddhyādiṣvabhimānavān /
tāvatkartṛtvabhoktṛtvasukhaduḥkhādibhāgbhavet // 35

34-35. The reflection of the pure eternal consciousness obtained in the gross components of this mortal creation, such as in the body along with its bundle of other illusionary components, is mistakenly called a 'Jiva' (creature, an entity having life) in this mundane world. [In other words, the gross and perishable body which shows apparent signs of life because of the consciousness called Atma present inside it, is erroneously thought to be conscious itself, whereas the fact is on the contrary. So the body and other components of the creation, such as the mind and intellect, which exhibit signs of life, are called Jive or a living being.] This misconception is due to ignorance (34).

The Jiva undergoes sorrows and happiness, the feeling of being a doer of deeds and therefore an enjoyer or a sufferer from its deeds or actions only till the time it has pride and ego associated with its body, with the powers of its mind and intellect, with the stamina, strength, vitality and vigour that the life-force called Pran gives to it, along with the stupendous powers and potentials that its intelligence and wisdom bestows upon it (35).

आत्मनःसंसृतिर्नास्ति बुद्धेर्ज्ञानं न जात्विति ।

अविवेकाद्द्वयं युङ्क्त्वा संसारीति प्रवर्तते ॥३६॥

जडस्य चित्समायोगाच्चित्तं भूयाच्चितेस्तथा ।

जडसङ्गाज्जडत्वं हि जलाग्नयोर्मेलनं यथा ॥३७॥

ātmanaḥ saṁsṛtirnāsti buddherjñānaṁ na jātviti /
avivekāddvayaṁ yuṅktvā saṁsārāti pravartate // 36
jaḍasya citśamāyogāccittvaṁ bhūyāccitastathā /
jaḍasaṅgājjadatvaṁ hi jalāgnyormelanaṁ yathā // 37

36-37. In reality, the Atma (microcosmic soul of the Jiva) has no relevance to the fictitious world of birth and death, while the mind, acting independently, does not have the discriminatory powers of the intellect leading to wisdom, enlightenment and attainment or realisation of true knowledge of the 'self' (which is beyond logic and debates). Out of delusions and ignorance of the heart, the Jiva (creature) considers itself as 'belonging to this world', and consequentially indulges in various deeds and actions pertaining to the gross world (36).

Even as contact between water and fire results in the former being influenced by the latter and vice versa, that is to say the water getting heated and the latter getting cooled, contact (i.e. union, interaction) between the inanimate (i.e. the mind-intellect) and the animate (i.e. the Atma, soul) results in the former getting affected (influenced) by the latter and vice-versa. That is, since the Atma residing inside the body of an ignorance driven creature has to interact with the outside world through the medium of the mind, it is erroneously led to think that it is doing such and such deed through the means of the body and is therefore the 'doer' of deeds and therefore also the one who enjoys and suffers from them. Similarly, the mind, being in close contact with the Atma during this intercourse, also mislead to think that it is the enlightened and wise conscious factor in the body of a creature. Both appear to have acquired the characters of the other (37).

यावत्त्वत्पादभक्तानां सङ्गसौख्यं न विन्दति ।

तावत्संसारदुःखौघान्न निवर्तेन्नरः सदा ॥३८॥

तत्सङ्गलब्धया भक्त्या यदा त्वां समुपासते ।

तदा माया शनैर्याति तानवं प्रतिपद्यते ॥३९॥

yāvattvatpādabhaktānāṃ saṅgasaukhyam na vindati /
tāvatsamsāraduḥkhaughānna nivartennaraḥ sadā // 38
tatsaṅgalabdhayā bhaktyā yadā tvāṃ samupāsate /
tadā māyā śanairyāti tānavam pratipadyate // 39

38-39. Till the time a person does not enjoy a constant company of those who are devoted to your lotus-like holy feet, he cannot get over the bundles of worldly sorrows, troubles, miseries and tribulations (38).

When he starts to worship you with devotion, faith and dedication, which he has gradually acquired (imbibed) by constant, persistent, sincere and diligent contact with your ardent devotees, this Maya (delusions, ignorance) of yours, gradually, bit by bit, leaves him, and it becomes weak and ineffective over a period of time (39).

ततस्त्वज्ज्ञानसम्पन्नः सद्गुरुस्तेन लभ्यते ।

वाक्याज्ञानं गुरोर्लब्ध्वा त्वत्प्रसादाद्विमुच्यते ॥४०॥

तस्मात्त्वद्भक्तिहीनानां कल्पकोटिशतैरपि ।

न मुक्तिशङ्का विज्ञानशङ्का नैव सुखं तथा ॥४१॥

tatastvajjñānasampannaḥ sadgurustena labhyate /
vākyaññānam gurorlabdhvā tvatprasādādvimucyate // 40

tasmāttvadbhaktihānānām kalpakotiśatairapi /
na muktiśaṅkā vijñānaśaṅkā naiva sukhaṁ tathā // 41

40-41. Then that seeker finds a true teacher (a moral preceptor) who is rich with wisdom and is deeply steeped in the true knowledge pertaining to you. And having attained knowledge of the supreme truth or reality in the shape of ‘Maha Vakyas’ (the eternal truths; the great sayings of the Vedas) by the blessings (teachings) of the wise teacher, he gets emancipation and salvation by your grace and kindness (40).

Hence, those who are devoid of your devotion and lack dedication in you, cannot expect to have, even by a remote chance, either emancipation and salvation (Mukti) or ‘Brahma-Gyan’ (i.e. the knowledge of the true nature of the soul—that is, it is a microcosmic fraction of the vast macrocosmic supreme Soul of the creation called Brahm) in millions of Kalpas. [That is, almost eternally, perpetually, they will be entangled in the entrapping web cast by Maya in this mundane world and its incumbent cycle of birth and death as well as endless chain of miseries and torments.] Further, this is why there is no chance or scope of their ever having real, true happiness and bliss (41).

[Note :- (1) The Upanishads are great exponents of the metaphysical and spiritual philosophy enshrined in the Vedas. They expound and elucidate what the Vedas essentially mean in a very effective manner. Let us briefly see here what the four Mahavakyas are as described in selected Upanishads.

(a) Painglo-panishad, 3/2 of Shukla Yajur Veda says—‘Tattwa Masi’ = that essence is you; ‘Twam Tadasī’ = you are that; ‘Twam Brahmasī’ = you are Brahm; ‘Aham Brahmasī’ = I am Brahm.

(b) Mandal Brahmino-panishad, 2/2/5 of the same Veda asserts—‘So-a-ham’ = that is me, while the same Upanishad, in 3/1/6, asserts ‘Twamewahameva Twamiti’ = you are I and I am you.

(c) Shukar Rahasyo-panishad, 21/1-4 of Krishna Yajur Veda says—‘Om Pragayanam Brahm’ = OM salutations! Enlightenment and truthful knowledge is Brahm and vice versa; ‘OM Aham Brahmasmi’ = OM salutations! I am that Brahm; ‘OM Tatwamasi’ = OM salutations! Verily, that essence is you; ‘OM Ayam Atma Brahm’ = OM salutations! This Atma is indeed Brahm.

(d) An entire Upanishad called Mahavakyo-panishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is devoted to this subject. At other places in the different Upanishads also, there appear these glories axioms and maxims in different words but meaning the same truth.

Some of them are the following:--(a) ‘Pragnanam Brahm’ = Consciousness is Brahm. It is extracted from Aitreya Upanishad of Rig Veda. (b) ‘Tat Twam Asi’ = That thou art. It is culled from Chandogya Upanishad in Sam Veda. (c) ‘Ayam Atma’ = This Self is Brahm. It is taken from Mandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda. (d) ‘Aham Brahm Asmi’ = I am Brahm. It appears in the Brihardyanarkya Upanishad of Yajur Veda. The meaning of these 4 Mahavakyas are as following:— (a) The one and the same consciousness acts has the common substrata for both the macrocosm and microcosm. (b) That infinite all-pervading truth is the consciousness in you (i.e. the Jiva or the creature). (c) The Atma, which forms the very core, inner-self of a Jiva and forms its core personality, is the same as the universally prevalent supreme, absolute consciousness called the Brahm. (See also Uttar Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 27 and its footnote). (d) The

consciousness factor within the precincts of the creature's inner-self is the same as the supreme consciousness which is Brahm. As a natural, corollary, therefore, the Jiva becomes synonymous with Brahm.

(2) Emphasis is laid on attainment of the Lord's true knowledge by the path of Bhakti (pure, ardent, uncorrupted, dedicated devotion) as opposed to Gyan (reliance on knowledge, logic, intelligence, scriptural debates etc.).]

अतस्त्वत्पादयुगले भक्तिर्मे जन्मजन्मनि।

स्यात्त्वद्भक्तिमतां सङ्गोऽविद्या याभ्यां विनश्यति ॥४२॥

लोके त्वद्भक्तिनिरतास्त्वद्धर्मामृतवर्षिणः।

पुनन्ति लोकमखिलं किं पुनःस्वकुलोद्भवान् ॥४३॥

atastvatpādayugale bhaktirme janmajanmani /
syāttvadbhaktimatām saṅgo'vidyā yābhyām vinaśyati // 42
loke tvadbhaktiniratāstvadddharmāmṛtavarṣiṇaḥ /
punanti lokamakhilaṁ kiṁ punaḥsvakulodbhavān // 43

42-43. Therefore, my only wish/desire is to devotedly worship you and have sincere and unwavering dedication, devotion and faith in your two holy feet. I should have company of your devotees for all my births and ages to come, because ignorance can be eliminated by these two ways (methods) only (42).

In this world, those who remain engrossed in your Bhakti (sincere devotion), who are steadfastly vigilant and sincerely eager in having your devotion, who adore you and devotedly worship you, those who pour the nectar-like rain by way of preaching and elucidating upon, by way of highlighting and explaining the righteous, noble and upright path shown by you, which is called 'Dharma' —such persons not only purify and redeem the whole world at large but also those born in their own clan. There is no doubt about it (43).

नमोऽस्तु जगतां नाथ नमस्ते भक्तिभावन।

नमः कारुणिकानन्त रामचन्द्र नमोऽस्तु ते ॥४४॥

देव यद्यत्कृतं पुण्यं मया लोकजिगीषया।

तत्सर्वं तव बाणाय भूयाद्राम नमोऽस्तु ते ॥४५॥

namo'stu jagatām nātha namaste bhaktibhāvana /
namaḥ kāruṇikānanta rāmacandra namo'stu te // 44
deva yadyatkṛtaṁ puṇyaṁ mayā lokajigāṣayā /
tatsarvaṁ tava bāṇāya bhūyādrāma namo'stu te // 45

44-45. Oh Lord of the world! I bow before you in reverence and adoration. Oh the one who loves sincere devotion and faith! I bow before you to pay my obeisance. Oh the merciful, compassionate one! Oh the one without an end (i.e. the eternal one)! I bow

before you in reverence. Oh Sri Ramchandra! I repeatedly bow before you to pay my respects and deep regard (44).

Oh Lord! Whatever righteous and noble deeds that I have done with the object of attaining the divine and glorious world characterised by righteousness, nobility, good virtues and deeds—let all those worlds be the target of your arrow (see verse no. 15-18). [That is, let all my good deeds and their effects be nullified by your arrow because I have sinned against you by misbehaving with you besides becoming haughty and arrogant, something that does not behove the stature of an exalted Brahmin clan in which I am born. Let this be my punishment!] Oh Sri Ram! I submit myself before you with a bowed head' (45).

ततः प्रसन्नो भगवान् श्रीरामः करुणामयः।

प्रसन्नोऽस्मि तव ब्रह्मन्यत्ते मनसि वर्तते ॥४६॥

दास्ये तदखिलं कामं मा कुरुष्वत्र संशयम्।

ततः प्रीतेन मनसा भार्गवो राममब्रवीत् ॥४७॥

tataḥ prasanno bhagavān śrārāmaḥ karuṇāmayah /
prasanno'smi tava brahmanyatte manasi vartate // 46
dāsyē tadakhilaṁ kāmam mā kuruṣvātra saṁśayam /
tataḥ prātena manasā bhārgavo rāmamabravāt // 47

46-47. Then the most merciful and compassionate Lord Ram became pleased with him and said, 'Oh Brahmin! I am pleased. I shall fulfill all the wishes of your heart; do not doubt it'. At this assurance, Parashuram was happy and he said to Sri Ram (46-47)—

यदि मेऽनुग्रहो राम तवास्ति मधुसूदन।

त्वद्भक्तसङ्गस्त्वत्पादे दृढा भक्तिः सदास्तु मे ॥४८॥

स्तोत्रमेतत्पठेद्यस्तु भक्तिहीनोऽपि सर्वदा।

तवद्भक्तिस्तस्य विज्ञानं भूयादन्ते स्मृतिस्तव ॥४९॥

yadi me'nugraho rāma tavāsti madhusūdana /
tvadbhaktasaṅgastvatpāde dṛḍhā bhaktiḥ sadāstu me // 48
stotrametatpaṭhedyastu bhaktihāno'pi sarvadā /
tvadbhaktistasya vijñānaṁ bhūyādante smṛtistava // 49

48-49. 'Oh Madhusudan Ram (i.e. the most beautiful, charming, attractive and enchanting Ram who keeps the heart in thrall)! If you are pleased with me, let me have constant communion with your devotees and have strong, steadfast and unwavering devotion, faith, dedication and conviction for your holy lotus-like feet (48).

Besides this, if any non-believer or one who is devoid of devotion, faith, conviction, dedication and worship (towards/for you) reads or recites this Stotra (devotional hymns), let him be blessed with your devotion and faith, let him have

endearment and affection for you, let him become enlightened, realised and a wise one, and let him remember you at the end (i.e. at the time of his death)' (49).

तथेति राघवेणोक्तः परिक्रम्य प्रणम्य तम्।

पूजितस्तदनुज्ञातो महेन्द्राचलमन्वगात् ॥५०॥

राजा दशरथो हृष्टो रामं मृतमिवागतम्।

आलिङ्ग्यालिङ्ग्य हर्षेण नेत्राभ्यां जलमुत्सृजत् ॥५१॥

tatheti rāghavenoktaḥ parikramya praṇamya tam /
pūjitastadanujñāto mahendrācalamanvagāt // 50
rajā daśaratho hr̥ṣṭo rāmaṁ mṛtamivāgatam /
āliṅgyāliṅgya harṣeṇa netrābhyāṁ jalamutsrjat // 51

50-51. Thereafter, when Sri Ram assured him by saying 'It shall be so', Parashuram reverentially circumambulated him and bowed his head before him, and after being worshipped and honoured himself by Sri Ram in return, he proceeded to Mt. Mahendra (50).

King Dasrath thought that Sri Ram has returned back from the jaws of death. He enthusiastically and full of thrill embraced Sri Ram repeatedly, and rained tears of relief, joy and exhilaration from his eyes (51).

[Note:-The meeting place with Parashuram was during the marriage ceremony at Janakpur according to Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas and not en-route to Ayodhya.]

ततः प्रीतेन मनसा स्वस्थचित्तः पुरं ययौ।

रामलक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्नभरता देवसंमिताः।

स्वां स्वां भार्यामुपादाय रेमिरे स्वस्वमन्दिरे ॥५२॥

मातापितृभ्यां संहृष्टो रामः सीतासमन्वितः।

रेमे वैकुण्ठेभवने श्रिया सह यथा हरिः ॥५३॥

tataḥ prātena manasā svasthacittaḥ puram yayau /
rāmalakṣmaṇaśatrughnabharatā devasaṁmitāḥ /
svāṁ svāṁ bharyāmupādāya remire svasvamandire // 52
mātāpitṛbhyāṁ saṁhr̥ṣṭo rāmaḥ sātāsamanvitaḥ /
reme vaikunṭhabhavane śriyā saha yathā hariḥ // 53

52-53. After that, all of them (i.e. the marriage party) arrived at Ayodhya with a delighted and cheerful heart and mind. There, Sri Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan began enjoying their conjugal lives with their respective spouses in palaces which were like the abode of Gods (i.e. were as majestic and comfortable as the abode of the Gods in the heavens) (52).

Along with Sita, Sri Ram enhanced the happiness of his parents and lived cheerfully just like Lord Vishnu resides with Laxmi in his abode called Vaikuntha (53).

युधाजिन्नाम कैकेयीभ्राता भरतमातुलः।

भरतं नेतुमागच्छत्स्वराज्यं प्रीतिसंयुतः॥५४॥

प्रेषयामास भरतं राजा स्नेहसमन्वितः।

शत्रुघ्नं चापि संपूज्य युधाजितमरिन्दमः॥५५॥

yudhājinnāma kaikeyābhrātā bharatamātulaḥ /
bharataṃ netumāgacchatsvarājyaṃ prātisaṃyutaḥ // 54
preṣayāmāsa bharataṃ rājā snehasamanvitaḥ /
śatrughnaṃ cāpi saṃpūjya yudhājitamariṇdamaḥ // 55

54-55. During that period, Kaikeyi's brother and maternal uncle of Bharat, named Yuddhajeet, came there (at Ayodhya) to lovingly take Bharat to his place (54).

The king (Dasrath), who was a vanquisher of enemies, welcomed and duly honoured Yudhajit, and at his affectionate request, he sent Bharat and Shatrughan with him (55).

कौसल्या शुशुभे देवी रामेण सह सीतया।

देवमातेव पौलोम्या शच्या शक्रेण शोभना॥५६॥

kausalyā śuśubhe devā rāmeṇa saha sītayā /
devamāteva paulomyā śacyā śakreṇa śobhanā // 56

56. Mother Kaushalya looked as magnificent and adorable in the company of Sri Ram and Sita as Aditi, the mother of Gods, looks along with Shachi, the daughter of Pulom, and Indra, the king of Gods (56).

साकेते लोकनाथप्रथितगुणगणो लोकसङ्गीतकीर्तिः

श्रीरामः सीतयास्तेऽखिलजननिकरानन्दसन्दोहमूर्तिः

नित्यश्रीर्निर्विकारो निरवधिविभवो नित्यमायानिरासो

मायाकार्यानुसारी मनुज इव सदा भाति देवोऽखिलेशः॥५७॥

sākete lokanāthaprathitagunaṅgaṇo lokasaṅgātakārtiḥ
śrārāmaḥ sītayāste'khilajanānikarānandasandohamūrtiḥ /
nityaśrārnirvikāro niravadhivibhavo nityamāyānirāso
māyākāryānusārā manuja iva sadā bhāti devo'khileśaḥ // 57

57. He—whose glorious virtues and good characters are famed with Brahma and other Lokpals (custodians of the world), whose divine glories, good fames and stupendous accomplishments are lauded and sung in all the worlds, who is an embodiment of happiness, bliss, peace and tranquility of all humans put together (i.e. the whole humanity), who is eternal, infinite and changeless, who is a treasury of majesty, radiance, splendour, elegance, dignity and beauty, who is faultless and without blemishes,

and who, though being perpetually beyond the purview of Maya (delusions, ignorance, illusions, hallucinations, misconceptions et al.), still behaves and appears as if he were an ordinary person, follows the ordinary norms set by the creator for human beings, and appears to pursue worldly deeds and does them like ordinary humans—that all-pervading, all-encompassing supreme and the only Lord of the creation, Lord Ram, took up residence in Ayodhya (Saket), accompanied by his divine consort Sita (57).

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
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(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

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(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) ‘Dohawali’; (2) ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’; (10) ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Baal Kand (Canto 1);

(B) Book under preparation:

A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

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